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Author: Gilbert Parker

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CARNAC'S FOLLY

By Gilbert Parker

BOOK III

XVIII. A GREAT DECISION XIX. CARNAC BECOMES A CANDIDATE XX. JUNIA AND TARBOE HEAR THE NEWS XXI. THE SECRET MEETING XXII. POINT TO POINT XXIII. THE MAN WHO WOULD NOT XXIV. THE BLUE PAPER XXV. DENZIL TAKES A HAND IN THE GAME XXVI. THE CHALLENGE XXVII. EXIT XXVIII. A WOMAN WRITES A LETTER XXIX. CARNAC AND HIS MOTHER XXX. TARBOE HAS A DREAM XXXI. THIS WAY HOME XXXII. 'HALVES, PARDNER, HALVES'

CHAPTER XVIII

A GREAT DECISION

Months went by. In them Destiny made new drawings. With his mother, Carnac went to paint at a place called Charlemont. Tarboe pursued his work at the mills successfully; Junia saw nothing of Carnac, but she had a letter from him, and it might have been written by a man to his friend, yet with an undercurrent of sadness that troubled her.

She might, perhaps, have yielded to the attentions of Tarboe, had not an appealing message come from her aunt, and at an hour's notice went West again on her mission of sick-service.

Politically the Province of Quebec was in turmoil. The time was drawing near when the Dominion

Government must go to the polls, and in the most secluded cottage on the St. Lawrence, the virtues and defects of the administration were vital questions. Voters knew as much of technical law-making as the average voter everywhere, but no more, and sometimes less. Yet there was in the mind of the French-Canadian an intuition, which was as valuable as the deeper knowledge of a trained politician. The two great parties in the Province were led by Frenchmen. The English people, however, were chiefly identified with the party opposed to Barode Barouche, the Secretary of State.

As the agitation began in the late spring, Carnac became suddenly interested in everything political.

He realized what John Grier had said concerning politics—that, given other characteristics, the making of laws meant success or failure for every profession or trade, for every interest in the country. He had known a few politicians; though he had never yet met the most dominant figure in the Province—Barode Barouche, who had a singular fascination for him. He seemed a man dominant and plausible, with a right-minded impulsiveness. Things John Grier had said about Barouche rang in his ears.

As the autumn drew near excitement increased. Political meetings were being held everywhere. There was one feature more common in Canada than in any other country; opposing candidates met on the same platform and fought their fight out in the hearing of those whom they were wooing. One day Carnac read in a newspaper that Barode Barouche was to speak at St. Annabel. As that was not far from Charlemont he determined to hear Barouche for the first time. He had for him a sympathy which, to himself, seemed a matter of temperament.

"Mother," he said, "wouldn't you like to go and hear Barode Barouche at St. Annabel? You know him—I mean personally?"

"Yes, I knew him long ago," was the scarcely vocal reply.

"He's a great, fine man, isn't he? Wrong-headed, wrong-purposed, but a big fine fellow."

"If a man is wrong-headed and wrong-purposed, it isn't easy for him to be fine, is it?"

"That depends. A man might want to save his country by making some good law, and be mistaken both as to the result of that law and the right methods in making it. I'd like you to be with me when I hear him for the first time. I've got a feeling he's one of the biggest men of our day. Of course he isn't perfect. A man might want to save another's life, but he might choose the wrong way to do it, and that's wrongheaded; and perhaps he oughtn't to save the man's life, and that's wrong-purposed. There's no crime in either. Let's go and hear Monsieur Barouche."

He did not see the flush which suddenly filled her face; and, if he had, he would not have understood. For her a long twenty-seven years rolled back to the day when she was a young neglected wife, full of life's vitalities, out on a junction of the river and the wild woods, with Barode Barouche's fishing-camp near by. She shivered now as she thought of it. It was all so strange, and heart-breaking. For long years she had paid the price of her mistake. She knew how eloquent Barode Barouche could be; she knew how his voice had all the ravishment of silver bells to the unsuspecting. How well she knew him; how deeply she realized the darkness of his nature! Once she had said to him:

"Sometimes I think that for duty's sake you would cling like a leech."

It was true. For thirty long years he had been in one sense homeless, his wife having lost her reason three years after they were married. In that time he had faithfully visited the place of her confinement every month of his life, sobered, chastened, at first hopeful, defiant. At the bottom of his heart Barode Barouche did not want marital freedom. He had loved the mad woman. He remembered her in the glory of her youth, in the splendour of her beauty. The insane asylum did not destroy his memory.

Mrs. Grier remembered too, but in a different way. Her relations with him had been one swift, absorbing fever—a mad dream, a moment of rash impulse, a yielding to the natural feeling which her own husband had aroused: the husband who now neglected her while Barode Barouche treated her so well, until a day when under his beguilement a stormy impulse gave—Carnac. Then the end came, instant and final; she bolted, barred and locked the door against Barode and he had made little effort to open it. So they had parted, and had never clasped hands or kissed again. To him she was a sin of which he never repented. He had watched the growth and development of Carnac with a sharp sympathy. He was not a good man; but in him were seeds of goodness. To her he was the lash searing her flesh, day in day out, year in year out, which kept her sacred to her home. For her children's sake she did not tell her husband, and she had emptied out her heart over Carnac with overwhelming fondness.

"Yes, I'll go, Carnac," she said at last, for it seemed the easier way.

"I haven't been to a political meeting for many years."

"That's right. I like your being with me."

The meeting was held in what had been a skating-rink and drill-hall. On the platform in the centre was the chairman, with Barode Barouche on his right. There was some preliminary speech-making from the chairman. A resolution was moved supporting Barouche, his party and policy, and there were little explosions of merriment at strokes of unconscious humour made by the speakers; and especially by one old farmer who made his jokes on the spot, and who now tried to embalm Barouche with praise. He drew attention to Barouche's leonine head and beard, to his alert eyes and quizzical face, and said he was as strong in the field of legislation as he was in body and mind. Carnac noticed that Barouche listened good-naturedly, and now and then cocked his head and looked up at the ceiling as though to find something there.

There was a curious familiarity in the action of the head which struck Carnac. He and his mother were seated about five rows back from the front row on the edge of the aisle. As the meeting progressed, Barouche's eyes wandered slowly over the faces of his audience. Presently he saw Carnac and his mother. Mrs. Grier was conscious of a shock upon the mind of Barouche. She saw his eyes go misty with feeling. For him the world was suddenly shut out, and he only saw the woods of a late summer's afternoon, a lonely tent—and a woman. A flush crept up his face. Then he made a spasmodic gesture of the hand, outward, which again Carnac recognized as familiar. It was the kind of thing he did himself.

So absorbed was Barode Barouche that he only mechanically heard the chairman announce himself, but when he got to his feet his full senses came back. The sight of the woman to whom he had been so much, and who had been so much to him for one short month, magnetized him; the face of the boy, so like his own as he remembered it thirty years ago, stirred his veins. There before him was his own one unacknowledged child—the only child ever born to him. His heart throbbed. Then he began to speak. Never in all his life had he spoken as he did this day. It was only a rural audience; there was not much intelligence in it; but it had a character all its own. It was alive to its own interests, chiefly of agriculture and the river. It was composed of both parties, and he could stimulate his own side, and, perhaps, win the other.

Thus it was that, with the blood pounding through his veins, the inspired sensualist began his speech. It was his duty to map out a policy for the future; to give the people an idea of what his party meant to do; to guide, to inspire, to inflame.

As Carnac listened he kept framing the words not yet issued, but which did issue from Barouche's mouth; his quick intelligence correctly imagined the line Barouche would take; again and again Barouche made a gesture, or tossed his head, or swung upon his feet to right and left in harmony with Carnac's own mind. Carnac would say to himself: "Why, that's what I'd have done—that's what I'd have said, if I had his policy." More than once, in some inspired moment of the speech, he caught his mother's hand, and he did not notice that her hand trembled.

But as for one of Barouche's chapter of policy Carnac almost sprang to his feet in protest when Barouche declared it. To Carnac it seemed fatal to French Canada, though it was expounded with a taking air; yet as he himself had said it was "wrong-headed and wrong-purposed."

When the speech had finished to great cheering, Carnac suddenly turned to his mother:

"He's on the wrong track. I know the policy to down his. He's got no opponent. I'm going to stand against him at the polls."

She clutched his arm. "Carnac—Carnac! You don't know what you're doing."

"Well, I will pretty quick," he replied stoutly. "I'm out after him, if they'll have me."

CHAPTER XIX

CARNAC BECOMES A CANDIDATE

That night Carnac mapped out his course, carefully framed the policy to offset that of Barode Barouche, and wrote a letter to the Chairman of the Opposition at Montreal offering to stand, and putting forward an ingenious policy. He asked also for an interview; and the interview was granted by

telegram—almost to his surprise. He was aware, however, of the discontent among the English members of the Opposition, and of the wish of the French members to find a good compromise.

He had a hope that his singular position—the notoriety which his father's death and his own financial disfranchisement had caused—would be a fine card in his favour. He was not mistaken. His letter arrived at Headquarters when there were difficulties concerning three candidates who were pressing their claims. Carnac Grier, the disinherited son of the great lumber-king, who had fame as an artist, spoke French as though it were his native tongue, was an element of sensation which, if adroitly used, could be of great service. It might even defeat Barode Barouche. In the first place, Carnac was young, good-looking, personable, and taking in his manner. Barouche was old, experienced, with hosts of enemies and many friends, but with injurious egotism. An interview was, therefore, arranged at Headquarters.

On the morning of the day it took place, Carnac's anguished mother went with him to the little railway station of Charlemont. She had slept little the night before; her mind was in an eddy of emotions. It seemed dreadful that Carnac should fight his own father, repeating what Fabian had done in another way. Yet at the bottom of her heart there was a secret joy. Some native revolt in her had joy in the thought that the son might extort a price for her long sorrow and his unknown disgrace.

As she had listened to Barouche at the meeting, she realized how sincere yet insincere he was; how gifted and yet how ungracious was his mind. Her youth was over; long pain and regret had chastened her. She was as lonely a creature as ever the world knew; violence was no part of her equipment; and yet terrible memories made her assent to this new phase of Carnac's life. She wondered what Barouche would think. There was some ancient touch of war in her which made her rejoice that after long years the hammer should strike.

Somehow the thing's tremendous possibilities thrilled her. Carnac had always been a politician—always. She remembered how, when he was a boy, he had argued with John Grier on national matters, laid down the law with the assurance of an undergraduate, and invented theories impossible of public acceptance. Yet in every stand he had taken, there had been thought, logic and reasoning, wrongly premised, but always based on principles. On paper he was generally right; in practice, generally wrong. His buoyant devotion to an idea was an inspiration and a tonic. The curious thing was that, while still this political matter was hanging fire, he painted with elation.

His mother knew he did not see the thousand little things which made public life so wearying; that he only realized the big elements of national policy. She understood how those big things would inspire the artist in him. For, after all, there was the spirit of Art in framing a great policy which would benefit millions in the present and countless millions in the future. So, at the railway station, as they waited for the train, with an agitation outwardly controlled, she said:

"The men who have fought before, will want to stand, so don't be surprised if—"

"If they reject me, mother?" interrupted Carnac. No, I shan't be surprised, but I feel in my bones that I'm going to fight Barode Barouche into the last corner of the corral."

"Don't be too sure of that, my son. Won't the thing that prevents your marrying Junia be a danger in this, if you go on?"

Sullen tragedy came into his face, his lips set. The sudden paleness of his cheek, however, was lost in a smile.

"Yes, I've thought of that; but if it has to come, better it should come now than later. If the truth must be told, I'll tell it—yes, I'll tell it!"

"Be bold, but not reckless, Carnac," his mother urged.

Just then the whistling train approached. She longed to put a hand out and hold him back, and yet she ached to let him go. Yet as Carnac mounted the steps of the car, a cry went out from her heart: "My son, stay with me here—don't go." That was only in her heart, however; with her lips she said: "Good luck! God bless you, Carnac!" and then the train rolled away, leaving her alone in the bright, bountiful morning.

Before the day was done, Headquarters had accepted Carnac, in part, as the solution of their own difficult problem. The three applicants for the post each hated the other; but all, before the day was over, agreed to Carnac as an effective opponent of Barouche.

One thing seemed clear—Carnac's policy had elements of seduction appealing to the selfishness of all sections, and he had an eloquence which would make Barouche uneasy. That eloquence was shown in a

speech Carnac made in the late evening to the assembled executive. He spoke for only a quarter of an hour, but it was long enough to leave upon all who heard him an impression of power, pertinacity, picturesqueness and appeal. He might make mistakes, but he had qualities which would ride over errors with success.

"I'm not French," he said at last in his speech, "but I used to think and write in French as though I'd been born in Normandy. I'm English by birth and breeding, but I've always gone to French schools and to a French University, and I know what New France means. I stand to my English origin, but I want to see the French develop here as they've developed in France, alive to all new ideas, dreaming good dreams. I believe that Frenchmen in Canada can, and should, be an inspiration to the whole population. Their great qualities should be the fibre in the body of public opinion. I will not pander to the French; I will not be the slave of the English; I will be free, and I hope I shall be successful at the polls."

This was a small part of the speech which caused much enthusiasm, and was the beginning of a movement, powerful, and as time went on, impetuous.

He went to bed with the blood of battle throbbing in his veins. In the morning he had a reasonable joy in seeing the headlines of his candidature in the papers.

At first he was almost appalled, for never since life began had his personality been so displayed. It seemed absurd that before he had struck a blow he should be advertised like a general in the field. Yet common sense told him that in standing against Barouche, he became important in the eyes of those affected by Barouche's policy. He had had luck, and it was for him to justify that luck. Could he do it? His first thought, however, as his eyes fell on the headlines—he flushed with elation so that he scarcely saw—was for the thing itself. Before him there flashed a face, however, which at once sobered his exaltation. It was the face of Junia.

"I wonder what she will think," he said to himself, with a little perplexity.

He knew in his heart of hearts she would not think it incongruous that he, an artist, should become a politician. Good laws served to make life beautiful, good pictures ministered to beauty; good laws helped to tell the story of human development; good sculpture strengthened the soul; good laws made life's conveniences greater, enlarged activity, lessened the friction of things not yet adjusted; good laws taught their framers how to balance things, how to make new principles apply without disturbing old rights; good pictures increased the well-balanced harmony of the mind of the people. Junia would understand these things. As he sat at his breakfast, with the newspaper spread against the teapot and the milk-pitcher, he felt satisfied he had done the bold and right, if incomprehensible, thing.

But in another hotel, at another breakfast, another man read of Carnac's candidature with sickening surprise. It was Barode Barouche.

So, after twenty-seven long years, this was to be the issue! His own son, whom he had never known, was to fight him at the polls! Somehow, the day when he had seen Carnac and his mother at the political meeting had given him new emotions. His wife, to whom he had been so faithful in one sense since she had passed into the asylum, had died, and with her going, a new field of life seemed to open up to him. She had died almost on the same day as John Grier. She had been buried secludedly, piteously, and he had gone back to his office with the thought that life had become a preposterous freedom.

So it was that, on the day when he spoke at the political meeting, his life's tragedy became a hammer beating every nerve into emotion. He was like one shipwrecked who strikes out with a swimmer's will to reach his goal. All at once, on the platform, as he spoke, when his eyes saw the faces of Carnac and his mother the catastrophe stunned him like a huge engine of war. There had come to him at last a sense of duty where Alma Grier was concerned. She was nearly fifty years of age, and he was fifty-nine; she was a widow with this world's goods; she had been to him how near and dear! for a brief hour, and then—no more. He knew the boy was his son, because he saw his own face, as it had been in his youth, though his mother's look was also there-transforming, illumining.

He had a pang as he saw the two at the close of his meeting filtering out into the great retort of the world. Then it was that he had the impulse to go to the woman's home, express his sorrow, and in some small sense wipe out his wrong by offering her marriage. He had not gone.

He knew of Carnac's success in the world of Art; and how he had alienated his reputed father by an independence revolting to a slave of convention. He had even bought, not from Carnac, but from a dealer, two of Carnac's pictures and a statue of a riverman. Somehow the years had had their way with him. He had at long last realized that material things were not the great things of life, and that imagination, however productive, should be guided by uprightness of soul.

One thing was sure, the boy had never been told who his father was. That Barouche knew. He had the useful gift of reading the minds of people in their faces. From Carnac's face, from Carnac's mother's face, had come to him the real story. He knew that Alma Grier had sinned only once and with him. In the first days after that ill-starred month, he had gone to her, only to be repelled as a woman can repel whose soul has been shocked, whose self-respect has been shamed.

It had been as though she thrust out arms of infinite length to push him away, such had been the storm of her remorse, such the revulsion against herself and him. So they had fallen apart, and he had seen his boy grow up independent, original, wilful, capable—a genius. He read the newspaper reports of what had happened the day before with senses greatly alive.

After all, politics was unlike everything else. It was a profession recruited from all others. The making of laws was done by all kinds of men. One of the wisest advisers in river-law he had ever known was a priest; one of the best friends of the legislation of the medical profession was a woman; one of the bravest Ministers who had ever quarrelled with and conquered his colleagues had been an insurance agent; one of the sanest authorities on maritime law had been a man with a greater pride in his verses than in his practical capacity; and here was Carnac, who had painted pictures and made statues, plunging into politics with a policy as ingenious as his own, and as capable of logical presentation. This boy, who was bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh, meant to fight him. He threw back his head and laughed. His boy, his son, meant to fight him, did he? Well, so be it! He got to his feet, and walked up and down the room.

"God, what an issue this!" he said. "It would be terrific, if he won. To wipe me out of the life where I have flourished—what a triumph for him! And he would not know how great the triumph would be. She has not told him. Yet she will urge him on. Suppose it was she put the idea into his head!"

Then he threw back his head, shaking the long brown hair, browner than Carnac's, from his forehead. "Suppose she did this thing—she who was all mine for one brief moment! Suppose she—"

Every nerve tingled; every drop of blood beat hard against his walls of flesh; his every vicious element sprang into life.

"But no—but no, she would not do it. She would not teach her son to destroy his own father. But something must have told him to come and listen to me, to challenge me in his own mind, and then—then this thing!"

He stared at the paper, leaning over the table, as though it were a document of terror.

"I must go on: I must uphold the policy for which I've got the assent of the Government." Suddenly his hands clenched. "I will beat him. He shall not bring me to the dust. I gave him life, and he shall not take my life from me. He's at the beginning; I'm going towards the end. I wronged his mother—yes, I wronged him too! I wronged them both, but he does not know he's wronged. He'll live his own life; he has lived it—"

There came a tap at the door. Presently it opened and a servant came in. He had in his hand a half-dozen telegrams.

"All about the man that's going to fight you, I expect, m'sieu'," said the servant as he handed the telegrams.

Barode Barouche did not reply, but nodded a little scornfully.

"A woman has called," continued the servant. "She wants to see you, m'sieu'. It's very important, she says."

Barouche shook his head in negation. "No, Gaspard."

"It ain't one of the usual kind, I think, m'sieu'," protested Gaspard. "It's about the election. It's got something to do with that—" he pointed to the newspaper propped against the teapot.

"It's about that, is it? Well, what about that?" He eyed the servant as though to see whether the woman had given any information.

"I don't know. She didn't tell me. She's got a mind of her own. She's even handsome, and she's well-dressed. All she said was: 'Tell m'sieu' I want to see him. It's about the election—about Mr. Grier.'"

Barode Barouche's heart stopped. Something about Carnac Grier—something about the election—and a woman! He kept a hand on himself. It must not be seen that he was in any way moved.

"Is she English?"

"She's French, m'sieu'."

"You think I ought to see her, Gaspard?" said Barouche.

"Sure," was the confident reply. "I guess she's out against whoever's against you."

"You never saw her before."

"Not to my sense."

"But I haven't finished my breakfast."

"Well, if it's anything important that'll help you, m'sieu'. It's like whittling. If you can do things with your hands while you're talking and thinking, it's a great help. You go on eating. I'll show her up!"

Barouche smiled maliciously. "Well, show her up, Gaspard."

The servant laughed. "Perhaps she'll show herself up after I show her in," he said, and he went out hastily.

Presently the door opened again, and Gaspard stepped inside.

"A lady to see you, m'sieu'," he said.

Barouche rose from the table, but he did not hold out his hand. The woman was young, good looking, she seemed intelligent. There was also a latent cruelty in her face which only a student of human nature could have seen quickly. She was a woman with a grievance—that was sure. He knew the passionate excitement, fairly well controlled; he saw her bitterness at a glance. He motioned her to a chair.

"It's an early call," he said with a smile. Smiling was one of his serviceable assets; it was said no man could so palaver the public with his cheerful goodnature.

"Yes, it's an early call," she replied, "but I wish not to wait till you go to your office. I wanted you to know something. It has to do with Mr. Carnac Grier."

"Oh, that—eh!"

"It's something you've got to know. If I give you the sure means to win your election, it would be worth while—eh?"

The beating of Barouche's heart was hard, but nothing showed in his face. There he had control.

"I like people who know their own minds," he said, "but I don't believe anything till I study what I hear. Is it something to injure Mr. Grier?"

"If a married man went about as a single man and stood up for Parliament against you, don't you think you could spoil him?"

For a moment Barouche was silent. Here was an impeachment of his own son, but this son was out to bring his own father to the ground. There were two ways to look at it. There was the son's point of view, and there was his own. If he loved his son he ought to know the thing that threatened him; if he hated his son he ought to know. So, after a moment's study of the face with the fiery eyes and a complexion like roses touched with frost, he said slowly:

"Well, have I the honour of addressing Carnac Grier's wife?"

Barouche had had many rewards in his life, but the sweetest reward of all was now his own. As events proved, he had taken a course which, if he cared for his son, was for that son's well-being, and if he cared for himself most, was essential to his own well-being.

Relief crossed the woman's face. "I'll tell you everything," she said.

Then Luzanne told her story, avoiding the fact that Carnac had been tricked into the marriage. At last she said: "Now I've come here to make him acknowledge me. He's ruined my life, broken my hopes, and —"

"Broken your hopes!" interrupted Barode Barouche. "How is that?"

"I might have married some one else. I could have married some one else."

"Well, why don't you? There's the Divorce Court. What's to prevent it?"

"You ask me that—you a Frenchman and a Roman Catholic! I'm French. I was born in Paris."

"When will you let me see your papers?"

"When do you want to see them?"

"To-day-if possible to-day," he answered. Then he held her eyes. "To whom else here have you told this story?"

"No one—no one. I only came last night, and when I took up the paper this morning, I saw. Then I found out where you lived, and here I am, bien sur. I'm here under my maiden name, Ma'm'selle Luzanne Larue."

"That's right. That's right. Now, until we meet again, don't speak of this to anyone. Will you give me your word?"

"Absolutely," she said, and there was revenge and passion in her eyes. Suddenly a strange expression crept over her face. She was puzzled.

"There's something of him about you," she said, and her forehead gathered. "There's some look! Well, there it is, but it's something— I don't know what."

A moment later she was gone. As the door closed, he stretched his hands above his head.

"Nom de Dieu, what a situation!" he remarked.

CHAPTER XX

JUNIA AND TARBOE HEAR THE NEWS

To most people Carnac's candidature was a surprise; to some it was a bewilderment, and to one or two it was a shock. To the second class belonged Fabian Grier and his wife; to the third class belonged Luke Tarboe. Only one person seemed to understand it—by intuition: Junia.

Somehow, nothing Carnac did changed Junia's views of him, or surprised her, though he made her indignant often enough. To her mind, however, in the big things, his actions always had reasonableness. She had never felt his artist-life was to be the only note of his career. When, therefore, in the West she read a telegram in a newspaper announcing his candidature, she guessed the suddenness of his decision. When she read it, she spread the paper on the table, smoothed it as though it were a beautiful piece of linen, then she stretched out her hands in happy benediction. Like most of her sex, she loved the thrill of warfare. There flashed the feeling, however, that it would be finer sport if Carnac and Tarboe were to be at war, instead of Carnac and Barouche. It was curious she never thought of Carnac but the other man came throbbing into sight—the millionaire, for he was that now.

In one way, this last move of Carnac's had the elements of a master-stroke. She knew how strange it would seem to the rest of the world, yet it did not seem strange to her. No man she had ever seen had been so at home in the world of men, and also at home in the secluded field of the chisel and the brush as Carnac.

She took the newspaper over to her aunt, holding it up. The big headlines showed like semaphores on the page. As the graceful figure of Junia drew to her aunt—her slim feet, in the brown, well-polished boots, the long, full neck, and then the chin, Grecian, shapely and firm, the straight, sensitive nose, the wonderful eyes under the well-cut, broad forehead, with the brown hair, covering it like a canopy—the old lady reached out and wound her arms round the lissome figure. Situated so, she read the telegram, and then the old arms gripped her tighter.

Presently, the whistle of a train sounded. The aunt stretched out an approving finger to the sound. She realized that the figure round which her arms hung trembled, for it was the "through" daily train for Montreal.

"I'm going back at once, aunty," Junia said.

.....

"Well, I'm jiggered!"

These were Tarboe's words when Carnac's candidature came first to him in the press.

"He's 'broke' out in a new place," he added.

Tarboe loved the spectacular, and this was indeed spectacular. Yet he had not the mental vision of Junia who saw how close, in one intimate sense, was the relation between the artist life and the political life. To him it was a gigantic break from a green pasture into a red field of war. To her, it was a resolution which, in anyone else's life, would have seemed abnormal; in Carnac's life it had naturalness.

Tarboe had been for a few months only the reputed owner of the great business, and he had paid a big price for his headship in the weighty responsibility, the strain of control; but it had got into his blood, and he felt life would not be easy without it now.

Besides, there was Junia. To him she was the one being in the world worth struggling for; the bird to be caught on the wing, or coaxed into the nest, or snared into the net; and two of the three things he had tried without avail. The third—the snaring? He would not stop at that, if it would bring him what he wanted. How to snare her! He surveyed himself in the mirror.

"A great hulking figure like that!" he said in disapproval. "All bone and muscle and flesh and physical show! It wouldn't weigh with her. She's too fine. It isn't the animal in a man she likes. It's what he can do, and what he is, and where he's going."

Then he thought of Carnac's new outburst, and his veins ran cold. "She'll like that—but yes, she'll like that: and if he succeeds she'll think he's great. Well, she'd be right. He'll beat Barouche. He's young and brave, careless and daring. Now where am I in this fight? I belong to Barouche's party and my vote ought to go for him."

For some minutes he sat in profound thought. What part should he play? He liked Carnac, he owed him a debt which he could never repay. Carnac had saved him from killing Denzil. If that had happened, he himself might have gone to the gallows.

He decided. Sitting down, he wrote Carnac the following letter:

DEAR CARNAC GRIER,

I see you're beginning a new work. You now belong to a party that I am opposed to, but that doesn't stop me offering you support. It's not your general policy, but it is you, the son of your father, that I mean to work for. If you want financial help for your campaign— or after it is over—come and get it here—ten thousand or more if you wish. Your father, if he knew—and perhaps he does know—would be pleased that you, who could not be a man of business in his world, are become a man of business in the bigger world of law- making. You may be right or wrong in that policy, but that don't weigh with me. You've taken on as big a job as ever your father did. What's the use of working if you don't try to do the big thing that means a lot to people outside yourself! If you make new good laws, if you do something for the world that's wonderful, it's as much as your father did, or, if he was alive, could do now. Whatever there is here is yours to use. When you come back here to play your part, you'll make it a success—the whole blessed thing. I don't wish you were here now, except that it's yours—all of it— but I wish you to beat Barode Barouche.

Yours to the knife,

LUKE TARBOE.

He read the letter through, and coming to the words, "When you come back here to play your part, you'll make it a success—the whole blessed thing," he paused, reflecting . . . He wondered what Carnac would think the words meant, and he felt it was bold, and, maybe, dangerous play; but it was not more dangerous than facts he had dealt with often in the last two years. He would let it stand, that phrase of the hidden meaning. He did not post the letter yet.

Four days later he put on his wide-brimmed panama hat and went out into the street leading to the centre of the city. There was trouble in the river reaches between his men and those of Belloc-Grier, and he was keeping an appointment with Belloc at Fabian Grier's office, where several such meetings

had taken place.

He had not gone far, however, when he saw a sprightly figure in light-brown linen cutting into his street from a cross-road. He had not seen that figure for months—scarcely since John Grier's death, and his heart thumped in his breast. It was Junia. How would she greet him?

A moment later he met her. Raising his hat, he said: "Back to the firing-line, Miss Shale! It'll make a big difference to every one concerned."

"Are you then concerned?" she asked, with a faint smile.

"One of the most concerned," he answered with a smile not so composed as her own. "It's the honour of the name that's at stake."

"You want to ruin Mr. Grier's chances in the fight?"

"I didn't say that. I said, 'the honour of the name,' and the name of my firm is 'Grier's Company of Lumbermen.' So I'm in it with all my might, and here's a letter—I haven't posted it yet—saying to Carnac Grier where I stand. Will you read it? There's no reason why you shouldn't." He tore open the envelope and took the letter out.

Junia took it, after hesitation, and read it till she came to the sentence about Carnac returning to the business. She looked up, startled.

"What does that mean?" she asked, pointing to the elusive sentence.

"He might want to come into the business some day, and I'll give him his chance. Nothing more than that."

"Nothing more than that!" she said cynically. "It's bravely said, but how can he be a partner if he can't buy the shares?"

"That's a matter to be thought out," he answered with a queer twist to his mouth.

"I see you've offered to help him with cash for the election," she said, handing back the letter.

"I felt it had to be done. Politics are expensive they sap the purse. That's why."

"You never thought of giving him an income which would compensate a little for what his father failed to do for him?"

There was asperity in her tone.

"He wouldn't take from me what his father didn't give him." Suddenly an idea seized him. "Look here," he said, "you're a friend of the Griers, why don't you help keep things straight between the two concerns? You could do it. You have the art of getting your own way. I've noticed that."

"So you'd like me to persuade Fabian Grier to influence Belloc, because I'd make things easy for you!" she said briskly. "Do you forget I've known Fabian since I was a baby, that my sister is his wife, and that his interests are near to me?"

He did not knuckle down. "I think it would be helping Fabian's interests. Belloc and Fabian Grier are generally in the wrong, and to keep them right would be good business-policy. When I've trouble with Belloc's firm it's because they act like dogs in the manger. They seem to hate me to live."

She laughed—a buoyant, scornful laugh. "So all the fault is in Belloc and Fabian, is it?" She was impressed enormously by his sangfroid and will to rule the roost. "I think you're clever, and that you've got plenty of horse-sense, as they say in the West, but you'll be beaten in the end. How does it feel"—she asked it with provoking candour—"to be the boss of big things?"

"I know I'm always settling troubles my business foes make for me. I have to settle one of them now, and I'm glad I've met you, for you can help me. I want some new river-rules made. If Belloc and Grier'll agree to them, we'll do away with this constant trouble between our gangs."

"And you'd like me to help you?"

He smiled a big riverman's smile down at her, full of good-humour and audacity.

"If you could make it clear to Fabian that all I'm after is peace on the river, it'd do a lot of good."

"Well, do you know," she said demurely, "I don't think I'll take a hand in this game, chiefly because—" she paused.

"Yes: chiefly because—"

"Because you'll get your own way without help. You get everything you want," she added with a little savage comment.

A flood of feeling came into his eyes, his head jerked like that of a bull-moose. "No, I don't get everything I want. The thing I want most in the world doesn't come to me." His voice grew emotional. She knew what he was trying to say, and as the idea was not new she kept composure. "I'm not as lucky as you think me," he added.

"You're pretty lucky. You've done it all as easy as clasping your fingers. If I had your luck—!" she paused.

"I don't know about that, but if I could reach out and touch you at any time, as it were, I think it'd bring me permanent good luck. You'll find out one day that my luck is only a bubble the prick of a pin'll destroy. I don't misunderstand it. I've been left John Grier's business by Grier himself, and he's got a son that ought to have it, and maybe will have it, when the time is ripe."

Suddenly an angry hand flashed out towards him. "When the time is ripe! Does that mean, when you've made all you want, you'll give up to Carnac what isn't yours but his? Why don't you do it now?"

"Well, because, in the first place, I like my job and he doesn't want it; in the second place, I promised his father I'd run the business as he wished it run; and in the third place, Carnac wouldn't know how to use the income the business brings."

She laughed in a mocking, challenging way. "Was there ever a man didn't know how to use an income no matter how big it was! You're talking enigmas, and I think we'd better say good-bye. Your way to the Belloc offices is down that street." She pointed.

"And you won't help me? You won't say a word to Fabian?"

She shrugged a shoulder. "If I were a man like you, who's so big, so lucky, and so dominant, I wouldn't ask a woman to help me. I'd do the job myself. I'd keep faith with my reputation. But there's one nice thing about you: you're going to help Carnac to beat Barode Barouche. You've made a gallant offer. If you'd gone against him, if you'd played Barouche's game, I—"

The indignation which came to her face suddenly fled, and she said: "Honestly, I'd never speak to you again, and I always keep my word. Carnac'll see it through. He's a man of mark, Mr. Tarboe, and he'll be Prime Minister of the whole country one day. I don't think you'll like it."

"You hit hard, but if I hadn't taken the business, Carnac Grier wouldn't have got it. If it hadn't been me, it would have been some one else."

"Well, why don't you live like a rich man and not like a foreman?"

"I've been too busy to change my mode of living. I only want enough to eat and drink and wear, and that's not costly." Suddenly an idea came to him. "Now, if that business had been left to you, you'd be building a stone house somewhere; and you'd have horses and carriages, and lots of servants, and you'd swing along like a pretty coloured bird in the springtime, wouldn't you?"

"If I had wealth, I'd make it my servant. I'd give it its chance; but as I haven't got it, I live as I do—poor and unknown."

"Not unknown. See, you could control what belonged to John Grier, if you would. I need some one to show me how to spend the money coming from the business. What is wealth unless you buy things that give pleasure to life? Do you know—"

He got no further. "I don't know anything you're trying to tell me, and anyhow this is not the place—" With that she hastened from him up the street. Tarboe had a pang, and yet her very last words gave him hope. "I may be a bit sharp in business," he said to himself, "but I certainly am a fool in matters of the heart. Yet what she said at last had something in it for me. Every woman has an idea where a man ought to make love to her, and this open road certainly ain't the place. If Carnac wins this game with Barouche I don't know where I'll be with her— maybe I'm a fool to help him." He turned the letter over and over in his hand. "No, I'm not. I ought to do it, and I will."

Then he fell to brooding. He remembered about the second hidden will. There came upon him a wild wish to destroy it. He loved controlling John Grier's business. Never had anything absorbed him so. Life seemed a new thing. The idea of disappearing from the place where, with a stroke of his fingers, he moved five thousand men, or swept a forest into the great river, or touched a bell which set going a saw-mill with its many cross-cut saws, or filled a ship to take the pine, cedar, maple, ash or elm boards to Europe, or to the United States, was terrible to him. He loved the smell of the fresh-cut wood. The odour of the sawdust as he passed through a mill was sweeter than a million bunches of violets. Many a time he had caught up a handful of the damp dust and smelt it, as an expert gardener would crumble the fallen flowers of a fruit-tree and sniff the sweet perfume. To be master of one of the greatest enterprises of the New World for three years, and then to disappear! He felt he could not do it.

His feelings shook his big frame. The love of a woman troubled his spirit. Suppose the will were declared and the girl was still free, what would she do?

As he set foot in the office of the firm of Belloc, however, he steeled himself to composure.

His task well accomplished, he went back to his own office, and spent the day like a racehorse under the lash, restive, defiant, and reckless. When night and the shadows came, he sat alone in his office with drawn blinds, brooding, wondering.

CHAPTER XXI

THE SECRET MEETING

As election affairs progressed, Mrs. Grier kept withdrawn from public ways. She did not seek supporters for her son. As the weeks went on, the strain became intense. Her eyes were aflame with excitement, but she grew thinner, until at last she was like a ghost haunting familiar scenes. Once, and once only, did she have touch with Barode Barouche since the agitation began. This was how it happened:

Carnac was at Ottawa, and she was alone, in the late evening. As she sat sewing, she heard a knock at the front door. Her heart stood still. It was a knock she had not heard for over a quarter of a century, but it had an unforgettable touch. She waited a moment, her face pale, her eyes shining with tortured memory. She waited for the servant to answer the knock, but presently she realized that the servant probably had not heard. Laying down her work, she passed into the front hall. There for an instant she paused, then opened the door.

It was Barode Barouche. Then the memory of a summer like a terrible dream shook her. She trembled. Some old quiver of the dead days swept through her. How distant and how—bad it all was! For one instant the old thrill repeated itself and then was gone—for ever.

"What is it you wish here?" she asked.

"Will you not shut the door?" he responded, for her fingers were on the handle. "I cannot speak with the night looking in. Won't you ask me to your sitting-room? I'm not a robber or a rogue."

Slowly she closed the door. Then she turned, and, in the dim light, she said:

"But you are both a robber and a rogue."

He did not answer until they had entered the sitting-room.

"I gave you that which is out against me now. Is he not brilliant, capable and courageous?"

There was in her face a stern duty.

"It was Fate, monsieur. When he and I went to your political meeting at Charlemont it had no purpose. No blush came to his cheek, because he did not know who his father is. No one in the world knows—no one except myself, that must suffer to the end. Your speech roused in him the native public sense, the ancient fire of the people from whom he did not know he came. His origin has been his bane from the start. He did not know why the man he thought his father seemed almost a stranger to him. He did not understand, and so they fell apart. Yet John Grier would have given more than he had to win the boy to himself. Do you ever think what the boy must have suffered? He does not know. Only you and

I know!" She paused.

He thrust out a hand as though to stay her speech, but she went on again

"Go away from me. You have spoiled my life; you have spoiled my boy's life, and now he fights you. I give him no help save in one direction. I give to him something his reputed father withheld from him. Don't you think it a strange thing"—her voice was thick with feeling—"that he never could bear to take money from John Grier, and that, even as a child, gifts seemed to trouble him. I think he wanted to give back again all that John Grier had ever paid out to him or for him; and now, at last, he fights the man who gave him birth! I wanted to tell John Grier all, but I did not because I knew it would spoil his life and my boy's life. It was nothing to me whether I lived or died. But I could not bear Carnac should know. He was too noble to have his life spoiled."

Barode Barouche drew himself together. Here was a deep, significant problem, a situation that needed more expert handling than he had ever shown. As he stood by the table, the dim light throwing haggard reflections on her face, he had a feeling that she was more than normal. He saw her greater than he had ever imagined her. Something in him revolted at a war between his own son and himself. Also, he wanted to tell her of the danger in which Carnac was—how Luzanne had come, and was hidden away in the outskirts of the city, waiting for the moment when the man who rejected her should be sacrificed.

Now that Barouche was face to face with Alma Grier, however, he felt the appalling nature of his task. In all the years he had taken no chance to pay tribute to the woman who, in a real sense, had been his mistress of body and mind for one short term of life, and who once, and once only, had yielded to him. They were both advanced in years, and Life and Time had taken toll. She was haggard, yet beautiful in a wan way. He did not believe the vanished years had placed between them an impassable barrier.

He put his chances to the test at last.

"Yes, I know—I understand. You remained silent because your nature was too generous to injure anyone. Down at the bottom of his heart, cantankerous, tyrannical as he was, John Grier loved you, and I loved you also."

She made a protest of her hand. "Oh, no! You never knew what love was— never! You had passion, you had hunger of the body, but of love you did not know. I know you, Barode Barouche. You have no heart, you have only sentiment and imagination. No—no, you could not be true. You could never know how."

Suddenly a tempest of fire seemed to burn in his eyes, in his whole being. His face flushed: his eyes gleamed; his hands were thrust out with passion.

"Will you not understand that were I as foul as hell, a woman like you would make me clean again? The wild sin of our youth has eaten into the soul of my life. You think I have been indifferent to you and to our boy. No, never-never! That I left you both to yourselves was the best proof I was not neglectful. I was sorry, with all my soul, that you should have suffered through me. In the first reaction, I felt that nothing could put me right with you or with eternal justice. So I shrank away from you. You thought it was lust satisfied. I tell you it was honour shamed. Good God! You thought me just the brazen rouse, who seized what came his way, who ate the fruit within his grasp, who lived to deceive for his own selfish joy.

"Did you think that? Then, if you did, I do not wonder you should be glad to see my son fighting me. It would seem the horrible revenge Destiny should take." He took a step nearer to her. His face flamed, his arms stretched out. "I have held you in these arms. I come with repentance in my heart, with—"

Her face now was flushed. She interrupted him.

"I don't believe in you, Barode Barouche. At least my husband did not go from his hearthstone looking for what belonged to others. No—No—no; however much I suffered, I understood that what he did not feel for me at least he felt for no one else. To him, life was his business, and to the long end business mastered his emotions. I have no faith in you! In the depth of my soul something cries out: 'He is not true. His life is false.' To leave me that was right, but, monsieur, not as you left me. You pick the fruit and eat it and spit upon the ground the fibre and the skin. I am no longer the slave of your false eloquence. It has nothing in it for me now, nothing at all—nothing."

"Yet your son—has he naught of me? If your son has genius, I have the right to say a part of it came from me. Why should you say that all that's good in the boy is yours—that the boy, in all he does and says, is yours! No—no. Your long years of suffering have hardened into injustice and wrong."

Suddenly he touched her arm. "There are women as young as you were when I wronged you, who would be my wife now—young, beautiful, buoyant; but I come to you because I feel we might still have some years of happiness. Together, where our boy's fate mattered, we two could help him on his way. That is what I feel, my dear."

When he touched her arm she did not move, yet there was in his fingers something which stirred ulcers long since healed and scarred. She stepped back from him.

"Do not touch me. The past is buried for ever. There can be no resurrection. I know what I should do, and I will do it. For the rest of my life, I shall live for my son. I hope he will defeat you. I don't lift a hand to help him except to give him money, not John Grier's money but my own, always that. You are fighting what is stronger than yourself. One thing is sure, he is nearer to the spirit of your race than you. He will win—but yes, he will win!"

Her face suffused with warmth, became alive with a wonderful fire, her whole being had a simple tragedy. Once again, and perhaps for the last time, she had renewed the splendour of her young womanhood. The vital warmth of a great idea had given an expression to her face which had long been absent from it.

He fell back from her. Then suddenly passion seized him. The gaunt beauty of her roused a spirit of contest in him. The evil thing in him, which her love for her son had almost conquered, came back upon him. He remembered Luzanne, and now with a spirit alive with anger he said to her:

"No—no—no, he cannot win." He stretched out a hand. "I have that which will keep for me the place in Parliament that has been mine; which will send him back to the isolation whence he came. Do you think I don't know how to win an election? Why from east to west, from north to south in this Province of Quebec my name, my fame, have been all-conquering. Suppose he did defeat me, do you think that would end my political life? It would end nothing. I should still go on."

A scornful smile came to her lips. "So you think your party would find a seat for you who had been defeated by a young man who never knew what political life meant till he came to this campaign? You think they would find you a seat? I know you are coming to the end of your game, and when he defeats you, it will finish everything for you. You will disappear from public life, and your day will be done. Men will point at you as you pass along the street, and say: 'There goes Barode Barouche. He was a great man in his day. He was defeated by a boy with a painter's brush in his hand.' He will take from you your livelihood. You will go, and he will stay; he will conquer and grow strong. Go from me, Barode Barouche," she cried, thrusting out her hands against him, "go from me. I love my son with all my soul. His father has no place in my heart."

There had been upon him the wild passion of revenge. It had mastered him before she spoke, and while she spoke, but, as she finished, the understanding spirit of him conquered. Instead of telling her of Luzanne Larue, and of what he would do if he found things going against him, instead of that he resolved to say naught. He saw he could not conquer her. For a minute after she had ceased speaking, he watched her in silence, and in his eyes was a remorse which would never leave them. She was master.

Slowly, and with a sense of defeat, he said to her: "Well, we shall never meet again like this. The fight goes on. I will defeat Carnac. No, do not shake your head. He shall not put me from my place. For you and me there is no future—none; yet I want to say to you before we part for ever now, that you have been deeper in my life than any other woman since I was born."

He said no more. Catching up his hat from the chair, and taking his stick, he left the room. He opened the front door, stepped out, shut it behind him and, in a moment, was lost in the night.

CHAPTER XXII

POINT TO POINT

While these things were happening, Carnac was spending all his time in the constituency. Every day was busy to the last minute, every hole in the belt of his equipment was buckled tight. In spite of his enthusiasm he was, however, troubled by the fact that Luzanne might appear. Yet as time went on he gained confidence. There were days, however, when he appeared, mentally, to be watching the street

corners.

One day at a public meeting he thought the sensation had come. He had just finished his speech in reply to Barode Barouche—eloquent, eager, masterful. Youth's aspirations, with a curious sympathy with the French Canadian people, had idealized his utterances. When he finished there had been cheering, but in the quiet instant that followed the cheering, a habitant got up—a weird, wilful fellow who had a reputation for brag, yet who would not have hurt an enemy save in wild passion.

"M'sieu' Carnac Grier," he said, "I'd like to put a question to you. You've been asking for our votes. We're a family people, we Canucs, and we like to know where we're going. Tell me, m'sieu', where's your woman?"

Having asked the question, he remained standing. "Where's your woman?" the habitant had asked. Carnac's breath came quick and sharp. There were many hundreds present, and a good number of them were foes. Barode Barouche was on the same platform.

Not only Carnac was stirred by the question, for Barouche, who had listened to his foe's speech with admiring anxiety, was startled.

"Where's your woman?" was not a phrase to be asked anyhow, or anywhere. Barouche was glad of the incident. Ready as he was to meet challenge, he presently realized that his son had a readiness equally potent. He was even pleased to see the glint of a smile at the lips of the slim young politician, in whom there was more than his own commingling of temperament, wisdom, wantonness and raillery.

After a moment, Carnac said: "Isn't that a leading question to an unmarried man?"

Barouche laughed inwardly. Surely it was the reply he himself would have made. Carnac had showed himself a born politician. The audience cheered, but the questioner remained standing. He meant to ask another question.

"Sit down—sit down, jackass!" shouted some of the more raucous of the crowd, but the man was stubborn. He stretched out an arm towards Carnac.

"Bien, look here, my son, you take my advice. Pursue the primrose path into the meadows of matrimony."

Again Carnac shrank, but his mind rallied courageously, and he said: "There are other people who want to ask questions, perhaps." He turned to Barode Barouche. "I don't suggest my opponent has planned this heckling, but he can see it does no good. I'm not to be floored by catch-penny tricks. I'm going to win. I run straight. I haven't been long enough in politics to learn how to deceive. Let the accomplished professionals do that. They know how."

He waved a hand disdainfully at Barouche. "Let them put forth all that's in them, I will remain; let them exert the last ounce of energy, I will prevail; let them use the thousand devices of elections, I will use no device, but rely upon my policy. I want nothing except my chance in Parliament. My highest ambition is to make good laws. I am for the man who was the first settler on the St. Lawrence and this section of the continent—his history, his tradition, his honour and fame are in the history books of the world. If I should live a hundred years, I should wish nothing better than the honour of having served the men whose forefathers served Frontenac, Cartier, La Salle and Maisonneuve, and all the splendid heroes of that ancient age. What they have done is for all men to do. They have kept the faith. I am for the habitant, for the land of his faith and love, first and last and all the time."

He sat down in a tumult of cheering. Many present remarked that no two men they had ever heard spoke so much alike, and kept their attacks so free from personal things.

There had been at this public meeting two intense supporters of Carnac, who waited for him at the exit from the main doorway. They were Fabian's wife and Junia.

Barode Barouche came out of the hall before Carnac. His quick eye saw the two ladies, and he raised his broad-brimmed hat like a Stuart cavalier, and smiled.

"Waiting for your champion, eh?" he asked with cynical friendliness. "Well, work hard, because that will soften his fall." He leaned over, as it were confidentially, to them, while his friends craned their necks to hear what he said: "If I were you I'd prepare him. He's beaten as sure as the sun shines."

Junia was tempted to say what was in her mind, but her sister Sibyl, who resented Barouche's patronage, said:

"There's an old adage about the slip 'twixt the cup and the lip, Monsieur

Barouche. He's young, and he's got a better policy than yours."

"And he's unmarried, eh!" Barouche remarked. "He's unmarried, and I suppose that matters!" There was an undercurrent of meaning in his voice which did not escape Junia.

"And Monsieur Barouche is also unmarried," she remarked. "So you're even there."

"Not quite even. I'm a widower. The women don't work for me as they work for him."

"I don't understand," remarked Junia. "The women can't all marry him."

"There are a lot of things that can't be understood by just blinking the eyes, but there's romance in the fight of an unmarried man, and women like romance even if it's some one else's. There's sensation in it."

Barouche looked to where Carnac was slowly coming down the centre of the hall. Women were waving handkerchiefs and throwing kisses towards him. One little girl was pushed in front of him, and she reached out a hand in which was a wild rose.

"That's for luck, m'sieu'," she said.

Carnac took the rose, and placed it in his buttonhole; then, stooping down, he kissed the child's cheek. Outside the hall, Barouche winked an eye knowingly. "He's got it all down to a science. Look at him—kissing the young chick. Nevertheless, he's walking into an abyss."

Carnac was near enough now for the confidence in his face to be seen. Barouche's eyes suddenly grew resentful. Sometimes he had a feeling of deep affection for his young challenger; sometimes there was a storm of anger in his bosom, a hatred which can be felt only for a member of one's own family. Resentment showed in his face now. This boy was winning friends on every side.

Something in the two men, some vibration of temperament, struck the same chord in Junia's life and being. She had noticed similar gestures, similar intonations of voice, and, above all else, a little toss of the head backwards. She knew they were not related, and so she put the whole thing down to Carnac's impressionable nature which led its owner into singular imitations. It had done so in the field of Art. He was young enough to be the imitator without loss to himself.

"I'm doing my best to defeat you," she said to Barouche, reaching out a hand for good-bye, "and I shall work harder now than ever. You're so sure you're going to win that I'd disappoint you, monsieur—only to do you good."

"Ah, I'm sorry you haven't any real interest in Carnac Grier, if it's only to do me good! Well, goodbye—good-bye," he added, raising his hat, and presently was gone.

As Carnac drew near, Fabian's wife stepped forward. "Carnac," she said, "I hope you'll come with us on the river in Fabian's steam-launch. There's work to do there. It's pay-day in the lumber-yards on the Island, so please come. Will you?"

Carnac laughed. "Yes, there's no engagement to prevent it." He thanked Junia and Sibyl for all they had done for him, and added: "I'd like a couple of hours among the rivermen. Where's the boat?" Fabian's wife told him, and added: "I've got the roan team here, and you can drive us down, if you will."

A few moments afterwards, with the cheers of the crowd behind them, they were being driven by Carnac to the wharf where lay the "Fleur-de-lis." On board was Fabian.

"Had a good meeting, Carnac?" Fabian asked.

"I should call it first-class. It was like a storm, at sea-wind from one direction, then from another, but I think on the whole we had the best of it. Don't you think so?" he added to Fabian's wife.

"Oh, much the best," she answered. "That's so, Junia, isn't it?"

"I wouldn't say so positively," answered Junia. "I don't understand Monsieur Barouche. He talked as if he had something up his sleeve." Her face became clouded. "Have you any idea what it is, Carnac?"

Carnac laughingly shook his head. "That's his way. He's always bluffing. He does it to make believe the game's his, and to destroy my confidence. He's a man of mark, but he's having the biggest fight he ever had—of that I'm sure. . . . Do you think I'll win?" he asked Junia presently with a laugh, as they made their way down the river. "Have I conquest in my eye?"

How seldom did Junia have Carnac to herself in these days! How kind of Fabian to lend his yacht for the purpose of canvassing! But Sibyl had in her mind a deeper thing—she had become a match-maker. She and Fabian, when the boat left the shore, went to one corner of the stern, leaving Carnac and Junia in the bow.

Three miles below the city was the Island on which many voters were working in a saw-mill and lumberyard. It had supporters of Barouche chiefly in the yards and mills. Carnac had never visited it, and it was Junia's view that he should ingratiate himself with the workers, a rough- and-ready lot. They were ready to "burst a meeting" or bludgeon a candidate on occasion.

When Carnac asked his question Junia smiled up at him. "Yes, I think you'll win, Carnac. You have the tide with you." Presently she added: "I'm not sure that you've got all the cards, though—I don't know why, but I have that fear."

"You think that—"

She nodded. "I think Monsieur Barouche has some cards he hasn't played yet. What they are I don't know, but he's confident. Tell me, Carnac, is there any card that would defeat you? Have you committed any crime against the law—no, I'm sure you haven't, but I want to hear you say so." She smiled cheerfully at him.

"He has no card of any crime of mine, and he can't hit me in a mortal place."

"You have the right policy for this province. But tell me, is there anyone who could hurt you, who could spring up in the fight—man or woman?"

She looked him straight in the eye, and his own did not waver.

"There's no one has a knock-out blow for me—that's sure. I can weather any storm."

He paused, however, disconcerted, for the memory of Luzanne came to him, and his spirit became clouded. "Except one—except one," he added.

"And you won't tell me who it is?"

CHAPTER XXIII

THE MAN WHO WOULD NOT

"No, I can't tell you—yet," answered Carnac. "You ought to know; though you can't put things right."

"Don't forget you are a public man, and what might happen if things went wrong. There are those who would gladly roast you on a gridiron for what you are in politics."

"I never forget it. I've no crime to repent of, and I'm afraid of nothing in the last resort. Look, we're nearing the Island."

"It's your worst place in the constituency, and I'm not sure of your reception. Oh, but yes, I am," she added hastily. "You always win good feeling. No one really hates you. You're on the way to big success."

"I've had some unexpected luck. I've got Tarboe on my side. He's a member of Barouche's party, but he's coming with me."

"Did he tell you so?" she asked with apparent interest.

"I've had a letter from him, and in it he says he is with me 'to the knife!' That's good. Tarboe has a big hold on rivermen, and he may carry with him some of the opposition. It was a good letter—if puzzling."

"How, puzzling?"

"He said in one part of it: 'When you come back here to play your part you'll make it a success, the whole blessed thing.' I've no idea what he meant by that. I don't think he wants me as a partner, and I'll give him no chance of it. I don't want now what I could have had when Fabian left. That's all over, Junia."

"He meant something by it; he's a very able man," she replied gravely.
"He's a huge success."

"And women love success more than all else," he remarked a little cynically.

"You're unjust, Carnac. Of course, women love success; but they'd not sell their souls for it—not the real women—and you ought to know it."

"I ought to know it, I suppose," he answered, and he held her eyes meaningly. He was about to say something vital, but Fabian and his wife came.

Fabian said to him: "Don't be surprised if you get a bad reception here, Carnac. It's the worst place on the river, and I've no influence over the men—I don't believe Tarboe could have. They're a difficult lot. There's Eugene Grandois, he's as bad as they make 'em. He's got a grudge against us because of some act of father, and he may break out any time. He's a labour leader too, and we must be vigilant."

Carnac nodded. He made no reply in words. They were nearing the little dock, and men were coming to the point where the launch would stop.

"There's Grandois now!" said Fabian with a wry smile, for he had a real fear of results. He had, however, no idea how skilfully Carnac would handle the situation—yet he had heard much of his brother's adaptability. He had no psychological sense, and Carnac had big endowment of it. Yet Carnac was not demonstrative. It was his quiet way that played his game for him. He never spoke, if being could do what he wanted. He had the sense of physical speech with out words. He was a bold adventurer, but his methods were those of the subtlest. If a motion of the hand was sufficient, then let it go at that.

"You people after our votes never come any other time," sneeringly said Eugene Grandois, as Carnac and Fabian landed. "It's only when you want to use us."

"Would you rather I didn't come at all?" asked Carnac with a friendly smile. "You can't have it both ways. If I came here any other time you'd want to know why I didn't stay away, and I come now because it's good you should know if I'm fit to represent you in Parliament."

"There's sense, my bonny boy," said an English-Canadian labourer standing near. "What you got to say to that, little skeezicks?" he added teasingly to Eugene Grandois.

"He ain't got more gifts than his father had, and we all know what he was—that's so, bagosh!" remarked Grandois viciously.

"Well, what sort of a man was he?" asked Carnac coolly, with a warning glance at Fabian, who was resentful. Indeed, Fabian would have struck the man if his brother had not been present, and then been torn to pieces himself.

"What sort—don't you know the kind of things he done? If you don't, I do, and there's lots of others know, and don't you forget it, mon vieux."

"That's no answer, Monsieur Grandois—none at all. It tells nothing," remarked Carnac cheerily.

"You got left out of his will, m'sieu', you talk as if he was all right—that's blither."

"My father had a conscience. He gave me chance to become a partner in the business, and I wouldn't, and he threw me over—what else was there to do? I could have owned the business to-day, if I'd played the game as he thought it ought to be played. I didn't, and he left me out—that's all."

"Makin' your own way, ain't you?" said the English labourer. "That's hit you where you're tender, Grandois. What you got to say to that?"

The intense black eyes of the habitant sparkled wickedly, his jaws set with passion, and his sturdy frame seemed to fasten to the ground. His gnarled hands now shot out fiercely.

"What I got to say! Only this: John Grier played the devil's part. He turned me and my family out into the streets in winter-time, and the law upheld him, old beast that he was—sacre diable!"

"Beast-devil! Grandois, those are hard words about a man in his son's presence, and they're not true. You think you can say such things because I'm standing for Parliament. Beast, devil, eh? You've got a free tongue, Grandois; you forgot to say that my father paid the doctor's bill for your whole family when they were taken down with smallpox; and he kept them for weeks afterwards. You forgot to recall that when he turned you out for being six months behind with your rent and making no effort to pay up! Who was the devil and beast then, Grandois? Who spat upon his own wife and children then? You

haven't a good memory. . . . Come, I think your account with my father is squared; and I want you to vote to put my father's son in Parliament, and to put out Barode Barouche, who's been there too long. Come, come, Grandois, isn't it a bargain? Your tongue's sharp, but your heart's in the right place—is it a bargain?"

He held out his hand with applause from the crowd, but Grandois was not to be softened. His anger, however, had behind it some sense of caution, and what Carnac said about the smallpox incident struck him hard. It was the first time he had ever been hit between the eyes where John Grier was concerned. His prestige with the men was now under a shadow, yet he dared not deny the truth of the statement. It could be proved. His braggart hatred of John Grier had come home to roost. Carnac saw that, and he was glad he had challenged the man. He believed that in politics, as in all other departments of life, candour and bold play were best in the long run. Yet he would like to see the man in a different humour, and with joy he heard Junia say to Grandois.

"How is the baby boy, and how is madame, Monsieur Grandois?"

It came at the right moment, for only two days before had Madame Grandois given her husband the boy for which he had longed. Junia had come to know of it through a neighbour and had sent jellies to the sick woman. As she came forward now, Grandois, taken aback, said:

"Alors, they're all right, ma'm'selle, thank you. It was you sent the jellies, eh?"

She nodded with a smile. "Yes, I sent them, Grandois. May I come and see madame and the boy tomorrow?"

The incident had taken a favourable turn.

"It's about even-things between us, Grandois?" asked Carnac, and held out his hand. "My father hit you, but you hit him harder by forgetting about the smallpox and the rent, and also by drinking up the cash that ought to have paid the rent. It doesn't matter now that the rent was never paid, but it does that you recall the smallpox debt. Can't you say a word for me, Grandois? You're a big man here among all the workers. I'm a better Frenchman than the man I'm trying to turn out. Just a word for a good cause.

"They're waiting for you, and your hand on it! Here's a place for you on the roost. Come up."

The "roost" was an upturned tub lying face down on the ground, and in the passion of the moment, the little man gripped Carnac's hand and stood on the tub to great cheering; for if there was one thing the French- Canadians love, it is sensation, and they were having it. They were mostly Barouche's men, but they were emotional, and melodrama had stirred their feelings.

Besides, like the Irish, they had a love of feminine nature, and in all the river-coves Junia was known by sight at least, and was admired. She had the freshness of face and mind which is the heart of success with the habitants. With Eugene Grandois on his feet, she heard a speech which had in it the best spirit of Gallic eloquence, though it was crude. But it was forcible and adroit.

"Friends and comrades," said Eugene Grandois, with his hands playing loosely, "there's been misunderstandings between me and the Grier family, and I was out against it, but I see things different since M'sieu' Carnac has spoke—and I'm changing my mind—certainlee. That throwing out of my house hit me and my woman and little ones hard, and I've been resentin' it all these years till now; but I'm weighin' one thing agin another, and I'm willing to forget my wrongs for this young man's sake. He's for us French. Alors, some of you was out to hurt our friend M'sieu' Carnac here, and I didn't say no to it; but you'd better keep your weapons for election day and use them agin Barode Barouche.

"I got a change of heart. I've laid my plate on the table with a prayer that I get it filled with good political doctrine, and I've promise that the food I'm to get is what's best for all of us. M'sieu' Carnac Grier's got the right stuff in him, and I'm for him both hands up—both hands way up high, nom de pipe!"

At that he raised both hands above his head with a loud cheer, and later Carnac Grier was carried to the launch in the arms of Eugene Grandois' friends.

CHAPTER XXIV

"Who are you, ma'm'selle?"

It was in the house of Eugene Grandois that this question was asked of Junia. She had followed the experience on the Island by a visit to Grandois' house, carrying delicacies for the sick wife. Denzil had come with her, and was waiting in the street.

She had almost ended her visit when the outer door opened and Luzanne Larue entered carrying a dish she placed on the table, eyeing Junia closely. First they bowed to each other, and Junia gave a pleasant smile, but instantly she felt here was a factor in her own life—how, she could not tell.

To Luzanne, the face of Junia had no familiar feature, and yet she felt here was one whose life's lines crossed her own. So it was she presently said, "Who are you, ma'm'selle?" in a sharp voice. As Junia did not reply at once, she put the question in another form: "What is your name, ma'm'selle?"

"It is Junia Shale," said the other calmly, yet with heart beating hard. Somehow the question foreshadowed painful things, associated with Carnac. Her first glance at Luzanne showed the girl was well dressed, that she had a face of some beauty, that her eyes were full of glamour—black and bold, and, in a challenging way, beautiful. It was a face and figure full of daring. She was not French-Canadian; yet she was French; that was clear from her accent. Yet the voice had an accent of crudity, and the plump whiteness of the skin and waving fulness of the hair gave the girl a look of an adventuress. She was dressed in black with a white collar which, by contrast, seemed to heighten her unusual nature.

At first Junia shuddered, for Luzanne's presence made her uneasy; yet the girl must have good qualities, for she had brought comforts to the sick woman, and indeed, within, madame had spoken of the "dear beautiful stranger." That could be no other than this girl. She became composed. Yet she had a feeling that between them was a situation needing all her resources. About what? She would soon know, and she gave her name at last slowly, keeping her eyes on those of Luzanne.

At mention of the name, Luzanne's eyes took on prejudice and moroseness. The pupils enlarged, the lids half closed, the face grew sour.

"Junia Shale—you are Junia Shale?" The voice was bitter and resentful.

Junia nodded, and in her smile was understanding and conflict, for she felt this girl to be her foe.

"We must have a talk—that's sure," Luzanne said with decision.

"Who are you?" asked Junia calmly. "I am Luzanne Larue."

"That makes me no wiser."

"Hasn't Carnac Grier spoken of me?"

Junia shook her head, and turned her face towards the door of Madame Grandois' room. "Had we not better go somewhere else to talk, after you've seen Madame Grandois and the baby?" she asked with a smile, yet she felt she was about to face an alarming event. "Madame Grandois has spoken pleasantly of you to me," Junia added, for tact was her prompt faculty. "If you'd come where we could talk undisturbed—do you see?"

Luzanne made no reply in words, but taking up the dish she went into the sick-room, and Junia heard her in short friendly speech with Madame Grandois. Luzanne appeared again soon and spoke: "Now we can go where I'm boarding. It's only three doors away, and we can be safe there. You'd like to talk with me—ah, yes, surelee!"

Her eyes were combative and repellent, but Junia was not dismayed, and she said: "What shall we talk about?"

"There's only one thing and one person to talk about, ma'm'selle."

"I still don't know what you mean."

"Aren't you engaged to Carnac Grier? Don't you think you're going to marry him? . . . Don't you like to tell the truth, then?" she added.

Junia raised her eyebrows. "I'm not engaged to Carnac Grier, and he has never asked me to marry

him—but what business is it of yours, ma'm'selle?"

"Come and I'll tell you." Luzanne moved towards the door. They were speechless till they reached Luzanne's lodgings.

"This is the house of Monsieur Marmette, an agent of Monsieur Barouche," said Junia. "I know it."

"You'll know it better soon. The agent of M'sieu' Barouche is a man of mark about here, and he'll be more marked soon—but yes!"

"You think Monsieur Barouche will be elected, do you?" asked Junia, as they closed the door.

"I know he will."

"I've been working for Monsieur Grier, and that isn't my opinion."

"I'm working for Barode Barouche, and I know the result."

They were now in Luzanne's small room, and Junia noted that it had all the characteristics of a habitant dwelling—even to the crucifix at the head of the bed, and the picture of the French-Canadian Premier of the Dominion on the wall. She also saw a rosary on a little hook beside the bed.

"How do you know?"

"Because I am the wife of Carnac Grier, and I know what will happen to him. . . . You turn pale, ma'm'selle, but your colour isn't going to alter the truth. I'm Carnac Grier's wife by the laws of New York State."

"Does Monsieur Grier admit he is your husband?"

"He must respect the law by which he married me."

"I don't believe he was ever honestly married to you," declared Junia. "Has he ever lived with you—for a single day?"

"What difference would that make? I have the marriage certificate here." She touched her bosom.

"I'd have thought you were Barode Barouche's wife by the way you act. Isn't it a wife's duty to help her husband—Shouldn't you be fighting against Barode Barouche?"

"I mean to be recognized as Carnac Grier's wife—that's why I'm here."

"Have you seen him since you've been here? Have you told him how you're working against him? Have you got the certificate with you?"

"Of course. I've got my head on like a piece of flesh and blood that belongs to me—bien sur."

She suddenly drew from her breast a folded piece of blue paper. "There it is, signed by Judge Grimshaw that married us, and there's the seal; and the whole thing can't be set aside. Look at it, if you like, petite."

She held it not far from Junia's face, and Junia could see that it was registration of a marriage of New York State. She could have snatched the paper away, but she meant to conquer Luzanne's savage spirit. "Well, how do you intend to defeat your husband?"

"I mean to have the people asked from a platform if they've seen the wife of the candidate, and then a copy of the certificate will be read to all. What do you think will happen after that?"

"It will have to be done to-night or to-morrow night," remarked Junia.

"Because the election comes the day after to-morrow,—eh

"Because of that. And who will read the document?"

"Who but the man he's trying to defeat?—tell me that."

"You mean Barode Barouche?"

"Who else?"

"Has he agreed to do it?"

Luzanne nodded. "On the day—Carnac became a candidate."

"And if Carnac Grier denies it?"

"He won't deny it. He never has. He says he was drunk when the thing was done—mais, oui."

"Is that all he says?"

"No. He says he didn't know it was a real marriage, and—" Luzanne then related Carnac's defence, and added: "Do you think anyone would believe him with the facts as they are? Remember I'm French and he's English, and that marriage to a French girl is life and death; and this is a French province!"

"And yet you are a Catholic and French, and were married by a Protestant judge."

"That is my own affair, ma'm'selle."

"It is not the thing to say to French-Canadians here. What do you get out of it all? If he is your husband, wouldn't it be better to have him successful than your defeated victim. What will be yours if you defeat—"

"Revenge—my rights—the law!" was the sharp rejoinder.

Junia smiled. "What is there in it all for you? If the man I married did not love me, I'd use the law to be free. What's the good of trying to destroy a husband who doesn't love you, who never loved you—never."

"You don't know that," retorted Luzanne sharply.

"Yes, I do. He never loved you. He never lived with you for a single day. That's in the power of a doctor to prove. If you are virtuous, then he has taken nothing; if you have given your all, and not to Carnac Grier, what will his mind be about you? Is it money? He has no money except what he earns. His father left him nothing—not a dollar. Why do you hate him so? I've known him all my life, and I've never known him hurt man or animal. When did he ever misuse you, or hurt you? Did he ever treat you badly? How did you come to know him? Answer that."

She paused and Luzanne flushed. The first meeting! Why, that was the day Carnac had saved her life, had taken her home safe from danger, and had begun a friendship with behind it only a desire to help her. And how had she repaid the saviour of her life? By tricking him into a marriage, and then by threatening him if he did not take her to his home. Truth is, down beneath her misconduct was a passion for the man which, not satisfied, became a passion to destroy him and his career. It was a characteristic of her blood and breed. It was a relic of ancient dishonour, inherited and searching; it was atavism and the incorrigible thing. Beneath everything was her desire for the man, and the mood in which she had fought for him was the twist of a tortured spirit. She was not so deliberate as her actions had indicated. She had been under the malicious influence of her father and her father's friend. She was like one possessed of a spirit that would not be deterred from its purpose. Junia saw the impression she had made, and set it down to her last words.

"Where did you first meet him? What was the way of it?" she added.

Suddenly Junia came forward and put her hands on Luzanne's shoulders. "I think you loved Carnac once, and perhaps you love him now, and are only trying to hurt him out of anger. If you destroy him, you will repent of it—so soon! I don't know what is behind these things you are doing, but you'll be sorry for it when it is too late. Yes, I know you have loved Carnac, for I see all the signs—"

"Do you love him then, ma'm'selle?" asked Luzanne exasperated. "Do you love him?"

"He has never asked me, and I have never told him that; and I don't know, but, if I did, I would move heaven and earth to help him, and if he didn't love me I'd help him just the same. And so, I think, should you. If you ever loved him, then you ought to save him from evil. Tell me, did Carnac ever do you a kind act, one that is worth while in your life?"

For a moment Luzanne stood dismayed, then a new expression drove the dark light from her eyes. It was as though she had found a new sense.

"He saved my life the day we first met," she said at last under Junia's hypnotic influence.

"And now you would strike him when he is trying to do the big thing. You threaten to declare his marriage, in the face of those who can elect him to play a great part for his country."

Junia saw the girl was in emotional turmoil, was obsessed by one idea, and she felt her task had vast

difficulty. That Carnac should have married the girl was incredible, that he had played an unworthy part seemed sure; yet it was in keeping with his past temperament. The girl was the extreme contrast of himself, with dark—almost piercing-eyes, and a paleness which was physically constitutional—the joy of the artistic spirit. It was the head of a tragedienne or a martyr, and the lean, rather beautiful body was eloquent of life.

Presently Junia said: "To try to spoil him would be a crime against his country, and I shall tell him you are here."

"He'll do nothing at all." The French girl's words were suddenly biting, malicious and defiant. The moment's softness she had felt was gone, and hardness returned. "If he hasn't moved against me since he married me, he wouldn't dare do so now."

"Why hasn't he moved? Because you're a woman, and also he'd believe you'd repent of your conduct. But I believe he will act sternly against you at once. There is much at stake."

"You want it for your own sake," said Luzanne sharply. "You think he'd marry you if I gave him up."

"Perhaps he'd ask me to marry him, if you weren't in the way, but I'd have my own mind about that, and knowing what you've told me—truth or lie—I'd weigh it all carefully. Besides, he's not the only man. Doesn't that ever strike you? Why try to hold him by a spurious bond when there are other men as good-looking, as clever? Is your world so bare of men—no, I'm sure it isn't," she added, for she saw anger rising in the impulsive girl. "There are many who'd want to marry you, and it's better to marry some one who loves you than to hold to one who doesn't love you at all. Is it hate? He saved your life—and that's how you came to know him first, and now you would destroy him! He's a great man. He would not bend to his father's will, and so he was left without a sou of his father's money. All because he has a conscience, and an independence worthy of the best that ever lived. . . . That's the soul of the man you are trying to hurt. If you had a real soul, there wouldn't be even the thought of this crime. Do you think he wouldn't loathe you, if you do this ghastly thing? Would any real man endure it for an hour? What do you expect to get but ugly revenge on a man who never gave anything except friendship?"

"Friendship—friendship—yes, he gave that, but emotion too."

"You think that real men marry women for whom they only have emotion. You think that he—Carnac Grier—would marry any woman on that basis? Come, ma'm'selle, the truth! He didn't know he was being married, and when you told him it was a real marriage he left you at once. You and yours tricked him—the man you'd never have known if he hadn't saved your life. You thought that with your beauty—yes, you are beautiful—you'd conquer him, and that he'd give in, and become a real husband in a real home. Come now, isn't that it?"

The other did not reply. Her face was alive with memories. The lower things were flying from it, a spirit of womanhood was living in her—feebly, but truly, living. She was now conscious of the insanity of her pursuit of Carnac. For a few moments she stood silent, and then she said with agitation:

"If I give this up"—she took from her breast the blue document—"he'd be safe in his election, and he'd marry you: is it not so, ma'm'selle?"

"He'd be safe for his election, but he has never asked me to marry him, and there are others besides him.—She was thinking of Tarboe. "Tell me," she added suddenly, "to whom have you told this thing in Montreal? Did you mean to challenge him yourself?"

"I told it only to M'sieu' Barouche, and he said he would use it at the right moment—and the right moment has come," she added. "He asked me for a copy of it last night, and I said I'd give it to him to-day. It's because of him I've been here quiet all these weeks as Ma'm'selle Larue."

"He is worse than you, mademoiselle, for he has known Carnac's family, and he has no excuse. If a man can't win his fight fairly, he oughtn't to be in public life."

After a few dark moments, with a sudden burst of feeling, Luzanne said:
"Well, Carnac won't be out of public life through me!"

She took the blue certificate from her breast and was about to tear it up, when Junia stopped her.

"Don't do that," Junia said, "don't tear it up yet, give it to me. I'll tear it up at the right moment. Give it to me, my dear."

She held out her hand, and the blue certificate was presently in her fingers. She felt a sudden weakness in her knees, for it seemed she held the career of Carnac Grier, and it moved her as she had

never been moved.

With the yielding of the certificate, Luzanne seemed suddenly to lose self-control. She sank on the bed beside the wall with a cry of distress.

"Mon Dieu—oh, Mon Dieu!" Then she sprang to her feet. "Give it back, give it back tome," she cried, with frantic pain. "It's all I have of him—it's all I have."

"I won't give it back," declared Junia quietly. "It's a man's career, and you must let it go. It's the right thing to do. Let it stand, mademoiselle."

She fully realized the half-insane mind and purpose of the girl, and she wrapped her arms around the stricken figure.

"See, my dear," she said, "it's no use. You can't have it back. Your soul is too big for that now. You can be happy in the memory that you gave Carnac back his freedom."

"But the record stands," said the girl helplessly. "Tell the truth and have it removed. You owe that to the man who saved your life. Have it done at once at Shipton."

"What will you do with the certificate?" She glanced at Junia's bosom where the paper was hidden. "I will give it to Carnac, and he can do what he likes with it."

By now the tears were streaming down the face of Luzanne Larue, and hard as it was for Junia, she tried to comfort her, for the girl should be got away at once, and only friendliness could achieve that. She would see Denzil—he was near by, waiting.

There would be a train in two hours for New York and the girl must take it—she must.

CHAPTER XXV

DENZIL TAKES A HAND IN THE GAME

Barode Baruche was excited. He had sure hope of defeating Carnac with the help of Luzanne Larue. The woman had remained hidden since her coming, and the game was now in his hands. On the night before the poll he could declare the thing, not easy to be forgiven by the French-Canadian public, which has a strong sense of domestic duty. Carnac Grier was a Protestant, and that was bad, and if there was added an offence against domestic morality, he would be beaten at the polls as sure as the river ran. He had seen Luzanne several times, and though he did not believe in her, he knew the marriage certificate was real. He had no credence in Carnac's lack of honour, yet it was strange he had not fought his wife, if his case was a good one.

Day by day he had felt Carnac's power growing, and he feared his triumph unless some sensation stopped it. Well, he had at hand the sufficient sensation. He would produce both the certificate of marriage and the French girl who was the legal wife of Carnac Grier. That Luzanne was French helped greatly, for it would be used by Carnac's foes as an insult to French Canada, and his pulses throbbed as he thought of the possible turmoil in the constituency.

Fortunately the girl was handsome, had ability, and spoke English with a French accent, and she was powerful for his purposes. He was out to prevent his own son from driving himself into private life, and he would lose no trick in the game, if he could help it.

Sentimental feeling—yes, he had it, but it did not prevent him from saving his own skin. Carnac had come out against him, and he must hit as hard as he could. It was not as though Carnac had been guilty of a real crime and was within the peril of the law. His offence was a personal one, but it would need impossible defence at the moment of election. In any case, if Carnac was legally married, he should assume the responsibilities of married life; and if he had honest reason for not recognizing the marriage, he should stop the woman from pursuing him. If the case kept Carnac out of public life and himself in, then justice would be done; for it was monstrous that a veteran should be driven into obscurity by a boy. In making his announcement he would be fighting his son as though he was a stranger and not of his own blood and bones. He had no personal connection with Carnac in the people's minds.

On the afternoon of the day that Junia had had her hour with Luzanne, he started for the house where Luzanne was lodging. He could not travel the streets without being recognized, but it did not matter, for the house where the girl lodged was that of his sub agent, and he was safe in going to it. He did not know, however, that Denzil had been told by Junia to watch the place and learn what he meant to do.

Denzil had a popular respect of Barode Barouche as a Minister of the Crown; but he had a far greater love of Carnac. He remained vigilant until after Junia and Luzanne had started in a cab for the railway-station. They left near three-quarters of an hour before the train was to start for New York; and for the first quarter of an hour after they left, Denzil was in apprehension.

Then he saw Barouche enter the street and go to the house of his sub-agent. The house stood by itself, with windows open, and Denzil did not scruple to walk near it, and, if possible, listen. Marmette, the subagent, would know of the incident between Junia and Luzanne; and he feared. Barouche might start for the station, overtake Luzanne and prevent her leaving. He drew close and kept his ears open.

He was fortunate, he heard voices; Marmette was explaining to Barouche that Junia and Luzanne had gone to the station, as "Ma'm'selle" was bound for New York. Marmette had sent word to M. Barouche by messenger, but the messenger had missed him. Then he heard Barouche in anger say:

"You fool—why did you let her leave! It's my bread and butter—and yours too—that's at stake. I wanted to use her against Grier. She was my final weapon of attack. How long ago did she leave?" Marmette told him.

Denzil saw Barode Barouche leave the house with grim concern and talking hard to Paul Marmette. He knew the way they would go, so he fell behind a tree, and saw them start for the place where they could order a cab. Then he followed them. Looking at his watch he saw that, if they got a cab, they would get to the station before the train started, and he wondered how he could retard Barouche. A delay of three minutes would be enough, for it was a long way, and the distance could only be covered with good luck in the time. Yet Denzil had hope, for his faith in Junia was great, and he felt sure she would do what she planned. He had to trot along fast, because Barouche and Marmette were going hard, and he could not see his way to be of use yet. He would give his right hand to help Carnac win against the danger Junia had suggested. It could not be aught to Carnac's discredit, or Junia would not have tried to get the danger out of Montreal; he had seen Luzanne, and she might be deadly, if she had a good weapon!

Presently, he saw Barouche and his agent stop at the door of a livery-stable, and were told that no cabs were available. There were none in the street, and time was pressing. Not far away, however, was a street with a tram-line, and this tram would take Barouche near the station from which Luzanne would start. So Barouche made hard for this street and had reached it when a phaeton came along, and in it was one whom Barouche knew. Barouche spoke to the occupant, and presently both men were admitted to the phaeton just as a tram-car came near.

As the phaeton would make the distance to the station in less time than the car, this seemed the sensible thing to do, and Denzil's spirits fell. There remained enough time for Barouche to reach the station before the New York train started! He got aboard the tram himself, and watched the phaeton moving quickly on ahead. He saw the driver of the phaeton strike his horse with a whip, and the horse, suddenly breaking into a gallop, slipped and fell to the ground on the tramtrack. A moment later the tram came to a stop behind the fallen horse, and Denzil saw the disturbed face of Barode Barouche looking for another trap—in any case, it would take three or four minutes to get the horse up and clear the track for the tram. There was no carriage in sight—only a loaded butcher's cart, a road-cleaner, and a heavily loaded van. These could be of no use to Barouche.

In his corner, Denzil saw the play with anxious eyes.

It was presently found that the horse had injured a leg in falling and could not be got to its feet, but had presently to be dragged from the tram-lines. It had all taken near five minutes of the time before the train went, and, with despair, Barouche mounted the steps of the tram. He saw Denzil, and shrewdly suspected he was working in the interests of Carnac. He came forward to Denzil.

"You're a long way from home, little man," he said in a voice with an acid note.

"About the same as you from home, m'sieu'," said Denzil.

"I've got business everywhere in this town," remarked Barouche with sarcasm—"and you haven't, have you? You're travelling privately, eh?"

"I travel as m'sieu' travels, and on the same business," answered Denzil with a challenging smile.

The look Barouche gave him then Denzil never forgot. "I didn't know you were in politics, mon vieux! What are you standing for? When are you going to the polls—who are you fighting, eh?"

"I'm fighting you, m'sieu', though I ain't in politics, and I'm going to the polls now," Denzil answered. Denzil had gained in confidence as he saw the arrogance of Barode Barouche. He spoke with more vigour than usual, and he felt his gorge rising, for here was a man trying to injure his political foe through a woman; and Denzil resented it. He did not know the secret of Luzanne Larue, but he did realize there was conflict between Junia Shale and Barouche, and between Barouche and Carnac Grier, and that enlisted his cooperation. By nature he was respectful; but the politician now was playing a dirty game, and he himself might fight without gloves, if needed. That was why his eyes showed defiance at Barouche now. He had said the thing which roused sharp anger in Barouche. It told Barouche that Denzil knew where he was going and why. Anger shook him as he saw Denzil take out his watch.

"The poll closes in three minutes, m'sieu'," Denzil added with a dry smile, for it was clear Barouche could not reach the station in time, if the train left promptly. The swiftest horses could not get him there, and these were not the days of motor-cars. Yet it was plain Barouche meant to stick to it, and he promptly said:

"You haven't the right time, beetle. The poll closes only when the train leaves, and your watch doesn't show that, so don't put on airs yet."

"I'll put on airs if I've won, m'sieu'," Denzil answered quietly, for he saw people in the tram were trying to hear.

Barouche had been recognized, and a murmur of cheering began, followed by a hum of disapproval, for Barouche had lost many friends since Carnac had come into the fray. A few folk tried to engage Barouche in talk, but he responded casually; yet he smiled the smile which had done so much for him in public life, and the distance lessened to the station. The tram did not go quite to the station, and as it stopped, the two men hurried to the doors. As they did so, an engine gave a scream, and presently, as they reached the inside of the station, they saw passing out at the far end, the New York train.

"She started five minutes late, but she did start," said Denzil, and there was malice in his smile.

As he looked at his watch, he saw Junia passing out of a door into the street, but Barode Barouche did not see her—his eyes were fixed on the departing train.

For a moment Barouche stood indecisive as to whether he should hire a locomotive and send some one after the train, and so get in touch with Luzanne in that way, or send her a telegram to the first station where the train would stop in its schedule; but presently he gave up both ideas. As he turned towards the exit of the station, he saw Denzil, and he came forward.

"I think you've won, mon petit chien," he said with vindictiveness, "but my poll comes to-morrow night, and I shall win."

"No game is won till it's all played, m'sieu', and this innings is mine!"

"I am fighting a bigger man than you, wasp," snarled Barouche.

"As big as yourself and bigger, m'sieu'," said Denzil with a smile.

There was that in his tone which made Barouche regard him closely. He saw there was no real knowledge of the relationship of Carnac and himself in Denzil's eyes; but he held out his hand with imitation courtesy, as though to say good-bye.

"Give me a love-clasp, spider," he said with a kind of sneer. "I'd like your love as I travel to triumph." A light of hatred came into Denzil's eyes. "Beetledog—wasp—spider" he had been called by this big man — well, he should see that the wasp could give as good as it got. His big gnarled hand enclosed the hand of Barode Barouche, then he suddenly closed on it tight. He closed on it till he felt it crunching in his own and saw that the face of Barode Barouche was like that of one in a chair of torture. He squeezed, till from Barouche's lips came a gasp of agony, and then he let go.

"You've had my love-clasp, m'sieu'," Denzil said with meaning, "and when you want it again let me know. It's what M'sieu' Carnac will do with you to-morrow night. Only he'll not let go, as I did, before the blood comes. Don't be hard on those under you, m'sieu'. Remember wasps and spiders can sting in their own way, and that dogs can bite."

"Little black beast," was the short reply, "I'll strip your hide for Hell's gridiron in good time."

"Bien, m'sieu', but you'll be in hell waiting, for I'm going to bury you here where you call better men than yourself dogs and wasps and spiders and beetles. And I'll not strip your 'hide,' either. That's for lower men than me."

A moment later they parted, Denzil to find Junia, and Barouche to prepare his speech for the evening. Barouche pondered. What should he do— should he challenge Carnac with his marriage with Luzanne Larue? His heart was beating hard.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE CHALLENGE

The day of the election came. Never had feeling run higher, never had racial lines been so cut across. Barouche fought with vigour, but from the going of Luzanne Larue, there passed from him the confidence he had felt since the first day of Carnac's candidature. He had had temptation to announce to those who heard him the night before the poll what Luzanne had told; but better wisdom guided him, to his subsequent content. He had not played a scurvy trick on his son for his own personal advantage. Indeed, when his meetings were all over, he was thankful for the disappearance of Luzanne. At heart he was not all bad. A madness had been on him. He, therefore, slept heavily from midnight till morning on the eve of the election, and began the day with the smile of one who abides the result with courage.

Several times he came upon Carnac in the streets, and they saluted courteously; yet he saw the confidence of Carnac in his bearing. Twice also he came upon Junia and he was startled by the look she gave him. It was part of his punishment that Junia was the source of his undoing where Luzanne was concerned. Junia knew about Luzanne; but if she condemned him now, what would she think if she knew that Carnac was his own son!

"A devilish clever girl that," he said to himself. "If he wins, it'll be due to her, and if he wins—no, he can't marry her, for he's already married; but he'll owe it all to her. If he wins! . . . No, he shall not win; I've been in the game too long; I've served too many interests; I've played too big a part."

It was then he met his agent, who said: "They're making strong play against us—the strongest since you began politics."

"Strong enough to put us in danger?" inquired Barouche. "You've been at the game here for thirty years, and I'd like to know what you think— quite honestly."

His agent was disturbed. "I think you're in danger; he has all your gifts, and he's as clever as Old Nick besides. He's a man that'll make things hum, if he gets in."

"If he gets in—you think . . . ?"

"He has as good a chance as you, m'sieu'. Here's a list of doubtful ones, and you'll see they're of consequence."

"They are indeed," said Barouche, scanning the list. "I'd no idea these would be doubtful."

"Luke Tarboe's working like the devil for Carnac. People believe in him. Half the men on that list were affected by Tarboe's turning over. Tarboe is a master-man; he has fought like hell."

"Nevertheless, I've been too long at it to miss it now," said the rueful member with a forced smile. "I must win now, or my game is up."

The agent nodded, but there was no certainty in his eye. Feeling ran higher and higher, but there was no indication that Barouche's hopes were sure of fulfilment. His face became paler as the day wore on, and his hands freer with those of his late constituents. Yet he noticed that Carnac was still glib with his tongue and freer with his hands. Carnac seemed everywhere, on every corner, in every street, at every polling booth; he laid his trowel against every brick in the wall. Carnac was not as confident as he seemed, but he was nearing the end of the trail; and his feet were free and his head clear. One good thing had happened. The girl who could do him great harm was not in evidence, and it was too late to spoil his chances now, even if she came. What gave him greatest hope was the look on Junia's face as he passed her. It was the sign of the conqueror—something he could not understand. It was knowledge and victory.

Also, he had a new feeling towards Tarboe, who had given him such powerful support. There was, then, in the man the bigger thing, the light of fairness and reason! He had had no talk with Tarboe, and he desired none, but he had seen him at three of his meetings, and he had evidence of arduous effort on his behalf. Tarboe had influenced many people in his favour, men of standing and repute, and the workmen of the Grier firm had come, or were coming, his way. He had always been popular with them, in spite of the strike he had fought, but they voted independently of their employers; and he was glad to know that most of them were with him in the fight.

His triumph over Eugene Grandois at the Island had been a good influence, and he had hopes of capturing the majority of the river people. Yet, strange to say, the Church had somewhat reversed its position, and at the last had swung round to Barouche, quietly, though not from the pulpit, supporting him. The old prejudice in favour of a Catholic and a Frenchman was alive again.

Carnac was keyed to anxiety, but outwardly seemed moving with brilliant certainty. He walked on air, and he spoke and acted like one who had the key of the situation in his fingers, and the button of decision at his will. It was folly electioneering on the day of the poll, and yet he saw a few labour leaders and moved them to greater work for him. One of these told him that at the Grier big-mill was one man working to defeat him by personal attacks. It had something to do with a so-called secret marriage, and it would be good to get hold of the man, Roudin, as soon as possible.

A secret marriage! So the thing had, after all, been bruited and used- what was the source of the information? Who was responsible? He must go to the mill at once, and he started for it. On the way he met Luke Tarboe.

"There's trouble down at the mill," Tarboe said. "A fellow called Roudin has been spreading a story that you're married and repudiate your wife. It'd be good to fight it now before it gets going. There's no truth in it, of course," he added with an opposite look in his eye, for he remembered the letter Carnac received one day in the office and his own conclusion then.

"It's a lie, and I'll go and see Roudin at once. . . . You've been a good friend to me in the fight, Tarboe, and I'd like a talk when it's all over."

"That'll be easy enough, Grier. Don't make any mistake-this is a big thing you're doing; and if a Protestant Britisher can beat a Catholic Frenchman in his own habitant seat, it's the clinching of Confederation. We'll talk it over when you've won."

"You think I'm going to win?" asked Carnac with thumping heart, for the stark uncertainty seemed to overpower him, though he smiled.

"If the lie doesn't get going too hard, I'm sure you'll pull it off. There's my hand on it. I'd go down with you to the mill, but you should go alone. You've got your own medicine to give. Go it alone, Grier. It's best—and good luck to you!"

A few moments later Carnac was in the yard of the mill, and in one corner he saw the man he took to be Roudin talking to a group of workmen. He hurried over, and heard Roudin declaring that he, Carnac, was secretly married to a woman whom he repudiated, and was that the kind of man to have as member of Parliament? Presently Roudin was interrupted by cheers from supporters of Carnac, and he saw it was due to Carnac's arrival. Roudin had courage. He would not say behind a man's back what he would not say to his face.

"I was just telling my friends here, m'sieu', that you was married, and you didn't acknowledge your wife. Is that so?"

Carnac's first impulse was to say No, but he gained time by challenging.

"Why do you say such things to injure me? Is that what Monsieur Barouche tells you to say?"

Roudin shook his head protestingly.

"If Monsieur Barouche does that he oughtn't to hold the seat, he ought to be sent back to his law offices."

"No, I didn't hear it from M'sieu' Barouche. I get it from better hands than his," answered Roudin.

"Better hands than his, eh? From the lady herself, perhaps?"

"Yes, from the lady herself, m'sieu'."

"Then bring the lady here and let us have it out, monsieur. It's a lie. Bring the lady here, if you know her."

Roudin shrugged a shoulder. "I know what I know, and I don't have to do what you say—no—no!"

"Then you're not honest. You do me harm by a story like that. I challenge you, and you don't respond. You say you know the woman, then produce her—there's no time to be lost. The poll closes in four hours. If you make such statements, prove them. It isn't playing the game—do you think so, messieurs?" he added to the crowd which had grown in numbers. At that moment a man came running from the en trance towards Carnac. It was Denzil.

"A letter for you, an important letter," he kept crying as he came nearer. He got the letter into Carnac's hands.

"Read it at once, m'sieu'," Denzil said urgently. Carnac saw the handwriting was Junia's, and he tore open the letter, which held the blue certificate of the marriage with Luzanne. He conquered the sudden dimness of his eyes, and read the letter. It said:

DEAR CARNAC,

I hear from Mr. Tarboe of the lies being told against you. Here is the proof. She has gone. She told it to Barode Barouche, and he was to have announced it last night, but I saw her first. You can now deny the story. The game is yours. Tell the man Roudin to produce the woman—she is now in New York, if the train was not lost. I will tell you all when you are M.P. JUNIA.

With a smile, Carnac placed the certificate in his pocket. How lucky it was he had denied the marriage and demanded that Roudin produce the woman! He was safe now, safe and free. It was no good any woman declaring she was married to him if she could not produce the proof—and the proof was in his pocket and the woman was in New York.

"Come, Monsieur Roudin, tell us about the woman, and bring her to the polls. There is yet time, if you're telling the truth. Who is she? Where does she live? What's her name?"

"Mrs. Carnac Grier—that's her name," responded Roudin with a snarl, and the crowd laughed, for Carnac's boldness gave them a sense of security.

"What was her maiden name?"

"Larue," answered the other sharply.

"What was her Christian name, since you know so much, monsieur?"

He had no fear now, and his question was audacity, but he knew the game was with him, and he took the risks. His courage had reward, for Roudin made no reply. Carnac turned to the crowd.

"Here's a man tried to ruin my character by telling a story about a woman whose name he doesn't know. Is that playing the game after the rules— I ask you?"

There were cries from the crowd supporting him, and he grew bolder. "Let the man tell his story and I'll meet it here face to face. I fear nothing. Out with your story, monsieur. Tell us why you haven't brought her into the daylight, why she isn't claiming her husband at the polls. What's the story? Let's have it now."

The truth was, Roudin dared not tell what he knew. It was based wholly on a talk he had partly overheard between Barode Barouche and Luzanne in the house where she stayed and where he, Roudin, lodged. It had not been definite, and he had no proofs. He was a sensationalist, and he had had his hour and could say no more, because of Barode Barouche. He could not tell the story of his overhearing, for why had not Barouche told the tale? With an oath he turned away and disappeared. As he went he could hear his friends cheering Carnac.

"Carnac Grier lies, but he wins the game," he said.

CHAPTER XXVII

EXIT

"Grier's in—Carnac's in—Carnac's got the seat!" This was the cry heard in the streets at ten-thirty at night when Carnac was found elected by a majority of one hundred and ten.

Carnac had not been present at the counting of the votes until the last quarter-hour, and then he was told by his friends of the fluctuations of the counting—how at one time his defeat seemed assured, since Barode Barouche was six hundred ahead, and his own friends had almost given up hope. One of his foes, however, had no assurance of Carnac's defeat. He was too old an agent to believe in returns till all were in, and he knew of the two incidents by which Carnac had got advantage—at the Island over Eugene Grandois, and at the Mill over Roudin the very day of polling; and it was at these points he had hoped to score for Barouche a majority. He watched Barouche, and he deplored the triumph in his eye, for there was no surety of winning; his own was the scientific mind without emotions or passions. He did not "enthuse," and he did not despair; he kept his head.

Presently there were fluctuations in favour of Carnac, and the six hundred by which Barouche led were steadily swallowed up; he saw that among the places which gave Carnac a majority were the Island and the Mill. He was also nonplussed by Carnac's coolness. For a man with an artist's temperament, he was well controlled. When he came into the room, he went straight to Barouche and shook hands with him, saying they'd soon offer congratulations to the winner. As the meeting took place the agent did not fail to note how alike in build and manner were the two men, how similar were their gestures.

When at last the Returning Officer announced the result, the agent dared not glance at his defeated chief. Yet he saw him go to Carnac and offer a hand.

"We've had a straight fight, Grier, and I hope you'll have luck in Parliament. This is no place for me. It's your game, and I'll eat my sour bread alone."

He motioned to the window with a balcony, beyond which were the shouting thousands. Then he smiled at Carnac, and in his heart he was glad he had not used the facts about Luzanne before the public. The boy's face was so glowing that his own youth came back, and a better spirit took residence in him. He gave thanks to the Returning Officer, and then, with his agent, left the building by the back door. He did not wait for the announcement of Carnac's triumph, and he knew his work was done for ever in public life.

Soon he had said his say at the club where his supporters, discomfited, awaited him. To demands for a speech, he said he owed to his workers what he could never repay, and that the long years they had kept him in Parliament would be the happiest memory of his life.

"We'll soon have you back," shouted a voice from the crowd.

"It's been a good fight," said Barode Barouche. Somehow the fact he had not beaten his son by the story of his secret marriage was the sole comfort he had. He advised his followers to "play the game" and let the new member have his triumph without belittlement.

"It's the best fight I've had in thirty years," he said at last, "and I've been beaten fairly."

In another hour he was driving into the country on his way to visit an old ex-Cabinet Minister, who had been his friend through all the years of his Parliamentary life. It did not matter that the hour was late. He knew the veteran would be waiting for him, and unprepared for the bad news he brought. The night was spent in pain of mind, and the comfort the ex-Minister gave him, that a seat would be found for him by the Government, gave him no thrill. He knew he had enemies in the Government, that the Prime Minister was the friend of the successful only, and that there were others, glad of his defeat, who would be looking for his place. Also he was sure he had injured the chances of the Government by the defeat of his policy.

As though Creation was in league against him, a heavy storm broke about two o'clock, and he went to bed cursed by torturing thoughts. "Chickens come home to roost—" Why did that ancient phrase keep ringing in his ears when he tried to sleep? Beaten by his illegitimate son at the polls, the victim of his own wrong-doing—the sacrifice of penalty! He knew that his son, inheriting his own political gifts, had done what could have been done by no one else. All the years passed since Carnac was begotten laid their deathly hands upon him, and he knew he could never recover from this defeat. How much better it would have been if he had been struck twenty-seven years ago!

Youth, ambition and resolve would have saved him from the worst then. Age has its powers, but it has its defects, and he had no hope that his own defects would be wiped out by luck at the polls. Spirit was

gone out of him, longing for the future had no place in his mind; in the world of public work he was dead and buried. How little he had got from all his life! How few friends he had, and how few he was entitled to have! This is one of the punishments that selfishness and wrong-doing brings; it gives no insurance for the hours of defeat and loss. Well, wealth and power, the friends so needed in dark days, had not been made, and Barode Barouche realized he had naught left. He had been too successful from the start; he had had all his own way; and he had taken no pains to make or keep friends. He well knew there was no man in the Cabinet or among his colleagues that would stir to help him—he had stirred to help no man in all the years he had served the public. It was no good only to serve the public, for democracy is a weak stick on which to lean. One must stand by individuals or there is no defence against the malicious foes that follow the path of defeat, that ambush the way. It is the personal friends made in one's own good days that watch the path and clear away the ambushers. It is not big influential friends that are so important—the little unknown man may be as useful as the big boss in the mill of life; and if one stops to measure one's friends by their position, the end is no more sure than if one makes no friends at all.

"There's nothing left for me in life—nothing at all," he said as he tossed in bed while the thunder roared and the storm beat down the shrubs. "How futile life is—'Youth's a dream, middle age a delusion, old age a mistake!'" he kept repeating to himself in quotation. "What does one get out of it? Nothing—nothing—nothing! It's all a poor show at the best, and yet—is it? Is it all so bad? Is it all so poor and gaunt and hopeless? Isn't there anything in it for the man who gives and does his best?"

Suddenly there came upon him the conviction that life is only futile to the futile, that it is only a failure to those who prove themselves incompetent, selfish and sordid; but to those who live life as it ought to be lived, there is no such thing as failure, or defeat, or penalty, or remorse or punishment. Because the straight man has only good ends to serve, he has no failures; though he may have disappointments, he has no defeats; for the true secret of life is to be content with what is decreed, to earn bread and make store only as conscience directs, and not to set one's heart on material things.

He got out of bed soon after daylight, dressed, and went to the stable and hitched his horse to the buggy. The world was washed clean, that was sure. It was muddy under foot, but it was a country where the roads soon dried, and he would suffer little inconvenience from the storm. He bade his host good-bye and drove away intent to reach the city in time for breakfast. He found the roads heavy, and the injury of the storm was everywhere to be seen. Yet it all did not distract him, for he was thinking hard of the things that lay ahead of him to do—the heart-breaking things that his defeat meant to him.

At last he approached a bridge across a stream which had been badly swept by the storm. It was one of the covered bridges not uncommon in Canada. It was not long, as the river was narrow, and he did not see that the middle pier of the bridge had been badly injured. Yet as he entered the bridge, his horse still trotting, he was conscious of a hollow, semi-thunderous noise which seemed not to belong to the horse's hoofs and the iron wheels of the carriage. He raised his eyes to see that the other end of the bridge was clear, and at that moment he was conscious of an unsteady motion of the bridge, of a wavering of the roof, and then, before he had time to do aught, he saw the roof and the sides and the floor of the bridge collapse and sink slowly down.

With a cry, he sprang from the carriage to retrace his way; but he only climbed up a ladder that grew every instant steeper; and all at once he was plunged downwards after his horse and carriage into the stream. He could swim, and as he swept down this thought came to him—that he might be able to get the shore, as he heard the cries of people on the bank. It was a hope that died at the moment of its birth, however, for he was struck by a falling timber on the head.

When, an hour later, he was found in an eddy of the river by the shore, he was dead, and his finders could only compose his limbs decently. But in the afternoon, the papers of Montreal had the following head-lines;

DEFEAT AND DEATH OF BARODE BAROUCHE THE END OF A LONG AND GREAT CAREER

As soon as Carnac Grier heard the news, he sent a note to his mother telling her all he knew. When she read the letter, she sank to the floor, overcome. Her son had triumphed indeed.

CHAPTER XXVIII

A WOMAN WRITES A LETTER

The whole country rang with the defeat and death of Barode Barouche, and the triumph of the disinherited son of John Grier. Newspapers drew differing lessons from the event, but all admitted that Carnac, as a great fighter, was entitled to success. The Press were friendly to the memory of Barode Barouche, and some unduly praised his work, and only a few disparaged his career.

When news of the tragedy came to Mrs. Grier, she was reading in the papers of Carnac's victory, and in her mind was an agonizing triumph, pride in a stern blow struck for punishment. The event was like none she could have imagined.

It was at this moment the note came from Carnac telling of Barouche's death, and it dropped from her hand to the floor. The horror of it smote her being, and, like one struck by lightning, she sank to the floor unconscious. The thing had hit her where soul and body were closely knit; and she had realized for the first time how we all must pay to the last penny for every offence we commit against the laws of life and nature. Barode Barouche had paid and she must pay—she also who had sinned with him must pay. But had she not paid?

For long she lay unconscious, but at last the servant, unknowing why she was not called to remove the breakfast things, found her huddled on the floor, her face like that of death. The servant felt her heart, saw she was alive, and worked with her till consciousness came back.

"That's right, ma'am, keep up heart. I'll send for M'sieu' Carnac at once, and we'll have you all right pretty quick."

But Mrs. Grier forbade Carnac to be sent for, and presently in her bed, declined to have the doctor brought. "It's no use," she said. "A doctor can do no good. I need rest, that's all."

Then she asked for notepaper and pen and ink, and so she was left alone. She must tell her beloved son why it was there never had been, and never could be, understanding between John Grier and himself. She had arrived at that point where naught was to be gained by further concealment. So through long hours she struggled with her problem, and she was glad Carnac did not come during the vexing day. He had said when he sent her word of his victory, that he feared he would not be able to see her the next day at all, as he had so much to do. She even declined to see Junia when she came, sending word that she was in bed, indisposed.

The letter she wrote ran thus:

MY BELOVED CARNAC,

Your news of the death of Barode Barouche has shocked me. You will understand when I tell you I have lived a life of agony ever since you became a candidate. This is why: you were fighting the man who gave you to the world.

Let me tell you how. I loved John Grier when I married him, and longed to make my life fit in with his. But that could not easily be, for his life was wedded to his business, and he did not believe in women. To him they were incapable of the real business of life, and were only meant to be housekeepers to men who make the world go round. So, unintentionally, he neglected me, and I was young and comely then, so the world said, and I was unwise and thoughtless.

Else, I should not have listened to Barode Barouche, who, one summer in camp on the St. Lawrence River near our camp, opened up for me new ways of thought, and springs of feeling. He had the gifts that have made you what you are, a figure that all turn twice to see. He had eloquence, he was thoughtful in all the little things which John Grier despised. In the solitude of the camp he wound himself about my life, and roused an emotion for him false to duty. And so one day—one single day, for never but the once was I weak, yet that was enough, God knows. . . . He went away because I would not see him again; because I would not repeat the offence which gave me years of sorrow and remorse.

After you became a candidate, he came and offered to marry me, tried to reopen the old emotion; but I would have none of it. He was convinced he would defeat you, and he wanted to avoid fighting you. But when I said, 'Give up the seat to him,' he froze. Of course, his seat belonged to his party and not alone to himself; but that was the test I put him to, and the answer he gave was, 'You want me to destroy my career in politics! That is your proposal, is it?' He was not honest either in life or conduct. I don't think he ever was sorry for me or for you, until perhaps these last few weeks; but I have sorrowed ever since the day you came to me very day, every hour, every minute; and the more because I could not tell John Grier the truth.

Perhaps I ought to have told the truth long ago, and faced the consequences. It might seem now that I would have ruined my home life, and yours, and Barode Barouche's, and John Grier's life if I had told the truth; but who knows! There are many outcomes to life's tragedies, and none might have been what I fancied. It is little comfort that Barode Barouche has now given all for payment of his debt. It gives no peace of mind. And it may be you will think I ought not to tell you the truth. I don't know, but I feel you will not misunderstand. I tell you my story, so that you may again consider if it is not better to face the world with the truth about Luzanne. We can live but once, and it is to our good if we refuse the secret way. It is right you should know the truth about your birth, but it is not right you should declare it to all the world now. That was my duty long ago, and I did not do it. It is not your duty, and you must not do it. Barode Barouche is gone; John Grier has gone; and it would only hurt Fabian and his wife and you to tell it now. You inherit Barode Barouche's gifts, and you have his seat, you represent his people—and they are your people too. You have French blood in your veins, and you have a chance to carry on with honour what he did with skill. Forgive me, if you can.

Your loving

MOTHER.

P.S. Do nothing till you see me.

CHAPTER XXIX

CARNAC AND HIS MOTHER

Returning from Barode Barouche's home to his mother's House on the Hill, Carnac was in a cheerless mood. With Barouche's death to Carnac it was as though he himself had put aside for ever the armour of war, for Barouche was the only man in the world who had ever tempted him to fight, or whom he had fought.

There was one thing he must do: he must go to Junia, tell her he loved her, and ask her to be his wife. She had given him the fatal blue certificate of his marriage and the marriage could now be ended with Luzanne's consent, for she would not fight the divorce he must win soon. He could now tell the truth, if need be, to his constituents, for there would be time enough to recover his position, if it were endangered, before the next election came, and Junia would be by his side to help him! Junia—would she, after all, marry him now? He would soon know. To-night he must spend with his mother, but to-morrow he would see Junia and learn his fate, and know about Luzanne. Luzanne had been in Montreal, had been ready to destroy his chance at the polls, and Junia had stopped it. How? Well, he should soon know. But now, at first, for his mother.

When he entered the House on the Hill, he had a sudden shiver. Somehow, the room where his mother had sat for so many years, and where he had last seen his father, John Grier, had a coldness of the tomb. There was a letter on the centre table standing against the lamp. He saw it was in his mother's handwriting, and addressed to himself.

He tore it open, and began to read. Presently his cheeks turned pale. More than once he put it down, for it seemed impossible to go on, but with courage he took it up again and read on to the end.

"God—God in Heaven!" he broke out when he had finished it. For a long time he walked the floor, trembling in body and shaking in spirit. "Now I understand everything," he said at last aloud in a husky tone. "Now I see what I could not see—ah yes, I see at last!"

For another time of silence and turmoil he paced the floor, then he stopped short. "I'm glad they both are dead," he said wearily. Thinking of Barode Barouche, he had a great bitterness. "To treat any woman so— how glad I am I fought him! He learned that such vile acts come home at last."

Then he thought of John Grier. "I loathed him and loved him always," he said with terrible remorse in his tone. "He used my mother badly, and yet he was himself; he was the soul that he was born, a genius in his own way, a neglecter of all that makes life beautiful—and yet himself, always himself. He never potted. He was real—a pirate, a plunderer, but he was real. And he cared for me, and would have had me in the business if he could. Perhaps John Grier knows the truth now! . . . I hope he does. For, if he

does, he'll see that I was not to blame for what I did, that it was Fate behind me. He was a big man, and if I'd worked with him, we'd have done big things, bigger than he did, and that was big enough."

"Do nothing till you see me," his mother had written in a postscript to her letter, and, with a moroseness at his heart and scorn of Barouche at his lips, he went slowly up to his mother's room. At her door he paused. But the woman was his mother, and it must be faced. After all, she had kept faith ever since he was born. He believed that. She had been an honest wife ever since that fatal summer twenty-seven years before.

"She has suffered," he said, and knocked at her door. An instant later he was inside the room. There was only a dim light, but his mother was sitting up in her bed, a gaunt and yet beautiful, sad-eyed figure of a woman. For a moment Carnac paused. As he stood motionless, the face of the woman became more drawn and haggard, the eyes more deeply mournful. Her lips opened as though she would speak, but no sound came, and Carnac could hardly bear to look at her. Yet he did look, and all at once there rushed into his heart the love he had ever felt for her. After all, he was her son, and she had not wronged him since his birth. And he who had wronged her and himself was dead, his pathway closed for ever to the deeds of life and time. As he looked, his eyes filled with tears and his lips compressed. At last he came to the bed. Her letter was in his hand.

"I have read it, mother."

She made no reply, but his face was good for her eyes to see. It had no hatred or repulsion.

"I know everything now," he added. "I see it all, and I understand all you have suffered these many years."

"Oh, my son, you forgive your mother?" She was trembling with emotion.

He leaned over and caught her wonderful head to his shoulder. "I love you, mother," he said gently. "I need you—need you more than I ever did."

"I have no heart any more, and I fear for you—"

"Why should you fear for me? You wanted me to beat him, didn't you?" His face grew hard, his lips became scornful. "Wasn't it the only way to make him settle his account?"

"Yes, the only way. It was not that I fear for you in politics. I was sure you would win the election. It was not that, it was the girl."

"That's all finished. I am free at last," he said. He held the blue certificate before her eyes.

Her face was deadly pale, her eyes expanded, her breath came sharp and quick. "How was it done? How was it done? Was she here in Montreal?"

"I don't know how it was done, but she was here, and Junia got this from her. I shan't know how till I've seen Junia."

"Junia is the best friend," said the stricken woman gently, "in all the world; she's—"

"She's so good a friend she must be told the truth," he said firmly.

"Oh, not while I live! I could not bear that—"

"How could I ask Junia to marry me and not tell her all the truth— mother, can't you see?"

The woman's face flushed scarlet. "Ah, yes, I see, my boy—I see."

"Haven't we had enough of secrecy—in your letter you lamented it! If it was right for you to be secret all these years, is it not a hundred times right now for me to tell you the truth. . . . I have no name—no name," he added, tragedy in his tone.

"You have my name. You may say I have no right to it, but it is the only name I can carry; they both are dead, and I must keep it. It wrongs no one living but you, and you have no hatred of me: you think I do not wrong you—isn't that so?"

His cheek was hot with feeling. "Yes, that's true," he said. "You must still keep your married name." Then a great melancholy took hold of him, and he could hardly hide it from her. She saw how he was moved, and she tried to comfort him.

"You think Junia will resent it all? . . . But that isn't what a girl does when she loves. You have done no

wrong; your hands are clean."

"But I must tell her all. Tarboe is richer, he has an honest birth, he is a big man and will be bigger still. She likes him, she—"

"She will go to you without a penny, my son."

"It will be almost without a penny, if you don't live," he said with a faint smile. "I can't paint—for a time anyhow. I can't earn money for a time. I've only my salary as a Member of Parliament and the little that's left of my legacy; therefore, I must draw on you. And I don't seem to mind drawing upon you; I never did."

She smiled with an effort. "If I can help you, I shall justify living on."

CHAPTER XXX

TARBOE HAS A DREAM

The day Carnac was elected it was clear to Tarboe that he must win Junia at once, if he was ever to do so, for Carnac's new honours would play a great part in influencing her. In his mind, it was now or never for himself; he must bring affairs to a crisis.

Junia's father was poor, but the girl had given their home an air of comfort and an art belonging to larger spheres. The walls were covered with brown paper, and on it were a few of her own water-colour drawings, and a few old engravings of merit. Chintz was the cover on windows and easy chairs, and in a corner of the parlour was a chintz-covered lounge where she read of an evening. So it was that, with Carnac elected and Barode Barouche buried, she sat with one of Disraeli's novels in her hand busy with the future. She saw for Carnac a safe career, for his two chief foes were gone—Luzanne Larue and Barode Barouche. Now she understood why Carnac had never asked her to be his wife. She had had no word with Carnac since his election—only a letter to thank her for the marriage certificate and to say that after M. Barouche was buried he would come to her, if he might. He did say, however, in the letter that he owed her his election.

"You've done a great, big thing for me, dearest friend, and I am your ever grateful Carnac"—that was the way he had put it. Twice she had gone to visit his mother, and had been told that Mrs. Grier was too ill to see her—overstrain, the servant had said. She could not understand being denied admittance; but it did not matter, for one day Mrs. Grier should know how she—Junia—had saved her son's career.

So she thought, as she gazed before her into space from the chintz-covered lounge on the night of the day Barode Barouche was buried. There was a smell of roses in the room. She had gathered many of them that afternoon. She caught a bud from a bunch on a table, and fastened it in the bosom of her dress. Somehow, as she did it, she had a feeling she would like to clasp a man's head to her breast where the rose was—one of those wild thoughts that come to the sanest woman at times. She was captured by the excitement in which she had moved during the past month—far more now than she had been in all the fight itself.

There came a knock at the outer door, and before that of her own room opened, she recognized the step of the visitor. So it was Tarboe had come. He remembered that day in the street when he met Junia, and was shown there were times when a woman could not be approached with emotion. He had waited till the day he knew she was alone, for he had made a friend of her servant by judicious gifts of money.

"I hope you're glad to see me," he said with an uncertain smile, as he saw her surprise.

"I hope I am," she replied, and motioned him to a seat. He chose a high-backed chair with a wide seat near the lounge. He made a motion of humorous dissent to her remark, and sat down.

"Well, we pulled it off somehow, didn't we?" she said. "Carnac Grier is M.P."

"And his foe is in his grave," remarked Tarboe dryly. "Providence pays debts that ought to be paid. This election has settled a lot of things," she returned with a smile.

"I suppose it has, and I've come here to try and find one of the settlements."

"Well, find them," she retorted.

"I said one of the settlements only. I have to be accurate in my life."

"I'm glad to hear of it. You helped Mr. Grier win his election. It was splendid of you. Think of it, Mr. Tarboe, Carnac Grier is beginning to get even with his foes."

"I'm not a foe—if that's what you mean. I've proved it."

She smiled provokingly. "You've proved only you're not an absolute devil, that's all. You've not proved yourself a real man—not yet. Do you think it paid your debt to Carnac Grier that you helped get him into Parliament?"

His face became a little heated. "I'll prove to you and to the world that I'm not an absolute devil in the Grier interests. I didn't steal the property. I tried to induce John Grier to leave it to Carnac or his mother, for if he'd left it to Mrs. Grier it would have come to Carnac. He did not do it that way, though. He left it to me. Was I to blame for that?"

"Perhaps not, but you could have taken Carnac in, or given up the property to him—the rightful owner. You could have done that. But you were thinking of yourself altogether."

"Not altogether. In the first place, I am bound to keep my word to John Grier. Besides, if Carnac had inherited, the property would have got into difficulties—there were things only John Grier and I understood, and Carnac would have been floored."

"Wouldn't you still have been there?"

"Who knows! Who can tell! Maybe not!"

"Carnac Grier is a very able man."

"But of the ablest. He'll be a success in Parliament. He'll play a big part; he won't puddle about. I meant there was a risk in letting Carnac run the business at the moment, and—"

"And there never was with you!"

"None. My mind had grasped all John Grier intended, and I have the business at my fingers' ends. There was no risk with me. I've proved it. I've added five per cent to the value of the business since John Grier died. I can double the value of it in twenty years—and easy at that."

"If you make up your mind to do it, you will," she said with admiration, for the man was persuasive, and he was playing a game in which he was a master.

Her remarks were alive with banter, for Tarboe's humour was a happiness to her.

"How did I buy your approval?" he questioned alertly.

"By ability to put a bad case in a good light. You had your case, and you have made a real success. If you keep on you may become a Member of Parliament some day!"

He laughed. "Your gifts have their own way of stinging. I don't believe I could be elected to Parliament. I haven't the trick of popularity of that kind."

Many thoughts flashed through Tarboe's mind. If he married her now, and the truth was told about the wills and the law gave Carnac his rights, she might hate him for not having told her when he proposed. So it was that in his desire for her life as his own, he now determined there should be no second will. In any case, Carnac had enough to live on through his mother. Also, he had capacity to support himself. There was a touch of ruthlessness in Tarboe. No one would ever guess what the second will contained—no one. The bank would have a letter saying where the will was to be found, but if it was not there!

He would ask Junia to be his wife now, while she was so friendly. Her eyes were shining, her face was alive with feeling, and he was aware that the best chances of his life had come to win her. If she was not now in the hands of Carnac, his chances were good. Yet there was the tale of the secret marriage—the letter he saw Carnac receive in John Grier's office! The words of the ancient Greek came to him as he looked at her: "He who will not strike when the hour comes shall wither like a flower, and his end be that of the chaff of the field."

His face flushed with feeling, his eyes grew bright with longing, his tongue was loosed to the enterprise. "Do you dream, and remember your dreams?" he asked with a thrill in his voice. "Do you?"

"I don't dream often, but I sometimes remember my dreams."

"I dream much, and one dream I have constantly."

"What is it?" she asked with anticipation.

"It is the capture of a wild bird in a garden—in a cultivated garden where there are no nests, no coverts for the secret invaders. I dream that I pursue the bird from flower-bed to flower-bed, from bush to bush, along paths and the green-covered walls; and I am not alone in my chase, for there are others pursuing. It is a bitter struggle to win the wild thing. And why? Because there is pursuing one of the pursuers another bird of red plumage. Do you understand?"

He paused, and saw her face was full of colour and her eyes had a glow. Every nerve in her was pulsing hard.

"Tell me," she said presently, "whom do you mean by the bird of red plumage? Is it a mere figure of speech? Or has it a real meaning?"

"It has a real meaning."

He rose to his feet, bent over her and spoke hotly. "Junia, the end of my waiting has come. I want you as I never wanted anything in my life. I must know the truth. I love you, Junia. I have loved you from the first moment I saw you, and nothing is worth while with you not in it. Let us work together. It is a big, big game I'm playing."

"Yes, it's a big game you're playing," she said with emotion. "It is a big, big game, and, all things considered, you should win it, but I doubt you will. I feel there are matters bigger than the game, or than you, or me, or anyone else. And I do not believe in your bird of red plumage; I don't believe it exists. It may have done so, but it doesn't now."

She also got to her feet, and Tarboe was so near her she could feel his hot breath on her cheek.

"No, it doesn't exist now," she repeated, "and the pursuer is not pursued. You have more imagination than belongs to a mere man of business—you're an inexperienced poet."

He caught her hand and drew it to his breast. "The only poetry I know is the sound of your voice in the wind, the laughter of your lips in the sun, the delight of your body in the heavenly flowers. Yes, I've drunk you in the wild woods; I've trailed you on the river; I've heard you in the grinding storm—always the same, the soul of all beautiful things. Junia, you shall not put me away from you. You shall be mine, and you and I together shall win our way to great ends. We will have opportunity, health, wealth and prosperity. Isn't it worth while?"

"Yes," she answered after a moment, "but it cannot be with you, my friend."

She withdrew her fingers and stepped back; she made a gesture of friendly repulsion. "You have said all that can be said, you have gifts greater than you yourself believe; and I have been tempted; but it is no use, there are deeper things than luxuries and the magazines of merchandise—much deeper. No, no, I cannot marry you; if you were as rich as Midas, as powerful as Caesar, I would not marry you—never, never, never."

"You love another," he said boldly. "You love Carnac Grier."

"I do not love you—isn't that enough?"

"Almost—almost enough," he said, embarrassed.

CHAPTER XXXI

THIS WAY HOME

All Junia had ever felt of the soul of things was upon her as she arranged flowers and listened to the

church bells ringing.

"They seem to be always ringing," she said to herself, as she lightly touched the roses. "It must be a Saint's Day—where's Denzil? Ah, there he is in the garden! I'll ask him."

Truth is, she was deceiving herself. She wanted to talk with Denzil about all that had happened of late, and he seemed, somehow, to avoid her. Perhaps he feared she had given her promise to Tarboe who had, as Denzil knew, spent an hour with her the night before. As this came to Denzil's brain, he felt a shiver go through him. Just then he heard Junia's footsteps, and saw her coming towards him.

"Why are the bells ringing so much, Denzil? Is it a Saint's Day?" she asked.

He took off his hat. "Yes, ma'm'selle, it is a Saint's Day," and he named it. "There were lots of neighbours at early Mass, and some have gone to the Church of St. Anne de Beaupre at Beaupre, them that's got sickness."

"Yes, Beaupre is as good as Lourdes, I'm sure. Why didn't you go, Denzil?"

"Why should I go, ma'm'selle—I ain't sick—ah, bah!"

"I thought you were. You've been in low spirits ever since our election, Denzil."

"Nothing strange in that, ma'm'selle. I've been thinking of him that's gone."

"You mean Monsieur Barouche, eh?"

"Not of M'sieu' Barouche, but of the father to the man that beat M'sieu' Barouche."

"Why should you be thinking so much of John Grier these days?"

"Isn't it the right time? His son that he threw off without a penny has proved himself as big a man as his father—ah, surelee! M'sieu' left behind him a will that gave all he had to a stranger. His own son was left without a sou. There he is now," he added, nodding towards the street.

Junia saw Carnac making his way towards her house. "Well, I'll talk with him," she said, and her face flushed. She knew she must give account of her doings with Luzanne Larue.

A few moments later in the house, her hand lay in that of Carnac, and his eyes met hers.

"It's all come our way, Junia," he remarked gaily, though there was sadness in his tone.

"It's as you wanted it. You won."

"Thanks to you, Junia," and he took from his pocket the blue certificate.

"That—oh, that was not easy to get," she said with agitation. "She had a bad purpose, that girl."

"She meant to announce it?"

"Yes, through Barode Barouche. He agreed to that."

Carnac flushed. "He agreed to that—you know it?"

"Yes. The day you were made candidate she arrived here; and the next morning she went to Barode Barouche and told her story. He bade her remain secret till the time was ripe, and he was to be the judge of that. He was waiting for the night before the election. Then he was going to strike you and win!"

"She told you that—Luzanne told you that?"

"And much else. Besides, she told me you had saved her life from the street-cars; that you had played fair at the start."

"First and last I played fair," he said indignantly.

Her eyes were shining. "Not from first to last, Carnac. You ought not to have painted her, or made much of her and then thrown her over. She knew—of course she knew, after a time, that you did not mean to propose to her, and all the evil in her came out. Then she willed to have you in spite of

yourself, believing, if you were married, her affection would win you in the end. There it was—and you were to blame."

"But why should you defend her, Junia?"

Her tongue became bitter now. "Just as you would, if it was some one else and not yourself."

His head was sunk on his breast, his eyes were burning. "It was a horrible thing for Barouche to plan."

"Why so horrible? If you were hiding a marriage for whatever reason, it should be known to all whose votes you wanted."

"Barouche was the last man on earth to challenge me, for he had a most terrible secret."

"What was it?" Her voice had alarm, for she had never seen Carnac so disturbed.

"He was fighting his own son—and he knew it!" The words came in broken accents.

"He was fighting his own son, and he knew it! You mean to say that!"
Horror was in her voice.

"I mean that the summer before I was born—"

He told her the story as his mother had told it to him. Then at last he said:

"And now you know Barode Barouche got what he deserved. He ruined my mother's life; he died the easiest death such a man could die. He has also spoiled my life."

"Nothing can spoil your life except yourself," she declared firmly, and she laid a hand upon his arm. "Who told you all this—and when?"

"My mother in a letter last night. I had a talk with her afterwards."

"Who else knows?" "Only you."

"And why did you tell me?"

"Because I want you to know why our ways must for ever lie apart."

"I don't grasp what you mean," she declared in a low voice.

"You don't grasp why, loving you, I didn't ask you to marry me long ago; but you found out for yourself from the one who was responsible, and freed me and saved me; and now you know I am an illegitimate son."

"And you want to cut me out of your life for a bad man's crime, not your own. . . . Listen, Carnac. Last night I told Mr. Tarboe I could not marry him. He is rich, he has control of a great business, he is a man of mark. Why do you suppose I did it, and for over two years have done the same?—for he has wanted me all that time. Does not a girl know when a real man wants her? And Luke Tarboe is a real man. He knows what he wants, and he goes for it, and little could stop him as he travels. Why do you suppose I did it?" Her face flushed, anger lit her eyes. "Because there was another man; but I've only just discovered he's a sham, with no real love for me. It makes me sorry I ever knew him."

"Me—no real love for you! That's not the truth: it's because I have no real name to give you—that's why I've spoken as I have. Never have I cared for anyone except you, Junia, and I could have killed anyone that wronged you—"

"Kill yourself then," she flashed.

"Have I wronged you, Junia?"

"If you kept me waiting and prevented me from marrying a man I could have loved, if I hated you—if you did that, and then at last told me to go my ways, don't you think it wronging me! Don't be a fool, Carnac. You're not the only man on earth a good girl could love. I tell you, again and again I have been moved towards Luke Tarboe, and if he had had understanding of women, I should now be his wife."

"You tell me what I have always known," he interposed. "I knew Tarboe had a hold on your heart. I'm not so vain as to think I've always been the one man for you. I lived long in anxious fear, and—"

"And now you shut the door in my face! Looked at from any standpoint, it's ugly."

"I want you to have your due," he answered with face paler. "You're a great woman—the very greatest, and should have a husband born in honest wedlock."

"I'm the best judge of what I want," she declared almost sharply, yet there was a smile at her lips. "Why, I suppose if John Grier had left you his fortune, you'd give it up; you'd say, 'I have no right to it,' and would give it to my brother-in-law, Fabian."

"I should."

"Yet Fabian had all he deserved from his father. He has all he should have, and he tried to beat his father in business. Carnac, don't be a bigger fool than there's any need to be. What is better than that John Grier's business should be in Tarboe's hands—or in yours? Remember, John Grier might have left it all to your mother, and, if he had, you'd have taken it, if she had left it to you. You'd have taken it even if you meant to give it away afterwards. There are hospitals to build. There are good and costly things to do for the State."

Suddenly she saw in his eyes a curious soft understanding, and she put her hand on his shoulder. "Carnac," she said gently, "great, great Carnac, won't you love me?"

For an instant he felt he must still put her from him, then he clasped her to his breast.

"But I really had to throw myself into your arms!" she said later.

CHAPTER XXXII

"HALVES, PARDNER, HALVES"

It was Thanksgiving Day, and all the people of the Province were en fete. The day was clear, and the air was thrilling with the spirits of the north country; the vibrant sting of oxygen, the blessed resilience of the river and the hills.

It was a great day on the St. Lawrence, for men were preparing to go to the backwoods, to the "shanties," and hosts were busy with the crops, storing them; while all in trade and industry were cheerful. There was a real benedictine in the air. In every church. Catholic and Protestant, hands of devoted workers had made beautiful altar and communion table, and lectern and pulpit, and in the Methodist chapel and the Presbyterian kirk, women had made the bare interiors ornate. The bells of all the churches were ringing, French and English; and each priest, clergyman and minister was moving his people in his own way and by his own ritual to bless God and live.

In the city itself, the Mayor had arranged a festival in the evening, and there were gathered many people to give thanks. But those most conspicuous were the poor, unsophisticated habitants, who were on good terms with the refreshment provided. Their enthusiasm was partly due to the presence of Carnac Grier. In his speech to the great crowd, among other things the Mayor said: "It is our happiness that we have here one whose name is familiar to all in French-Canada—that of the new Member of Parliament, Monsieur Carnac Grier. In Monsieur Grier we have a man who knows his own mind, and it is filled with the interests of the French as well as the English. He is young, he has power, and he will use his youth and power to advance the good of the whole country. May he live long!"

Carnac never spoke better in his life than in his brief reply. When he had finished, some one touched his arm. It was Luke Tarboe.

"A good speech, Grier. Can you give me a few moments?"

"Here?" asked Carnac, smiling.

"Not here, but in the building. There is a room where we can be alone, and I have to tell you something of great importance."

"Of great importance? Well, so have I to tell you, Tarboe."

A few minutes later they were in the Mayor's private parlour, hung with the portraits of past Governors and Mayors, and carrying over the door the coat-of-arms of the Province.

Presently Carnac said: "Let me give you my news first, Tarboe: I am to marry Junia Shale—and soon."

Tarboe nodded. "I expected that. She is worth the best the world can offer." There was a ring of honesty in his tone. "All the more reason why I should tell you what my news is, Carnac. I'm going to tell you what oughtn't yet to be told for another two years, but I feel it due you, for you were badly used, and so I break my word to your father."

Carnac's hand shot out in protest, but Tarboe took no notice. "I mean to tell you now in the hour of your political triumph that—"

"That I can draw on you for ten thousand dollars, perhaps?" shot out Carnac.

"Not for ten thousand, but in two years' time—or to-morrow—for a hundred and fifty times that if you want it."

Carnac shrugged his shoulders. "I don't know what you're driving at, Tarboe. Two years from now—or to-morrow—I can draw on you for a hundred and fifty times ten thousand dollars! What does that mean? Is it you're tired of the fortune left you by the biggest man industrially French-Canada has ever known?"

"I'll tell you the truth—I never had a permanent fortune, and I was never meant to have the permanent fortune, though I inherited by will. That was a matter between John Grier and myself. There was another will made later, which left the business to some one else."

"I don't see."

"Of course you don't see, and yet you must." Tarboe then told the story of the making of the two wills, doing justice to John Grier.

"He never did things like anyone else, and he didn't in dying. He loved you, Carnac. In spite of all he said and did he believed in you. He knew you had the real thing in you, if you cared to use it."

"Good God! Good God!" was all Carnac could at first say. "And you agreed to that?"

"What rights had I? None at all. I'll come out of it with over a half- million dollars—isn't that enough for a backwoodsman? I get the profits of the working for three years, and two hundred thousand dollars besides. I ought to be satisfied with that."

"Who knows of the will besides yourself?" asked Carnac sharply.

"No one. There is a letter to the bank simply saying that another will exists and where it is, but that's all.

"And you could have destroyed that will in my favour?"

"That's so." The voice of Tarboe was rough with feeling, his face grew dark. "More than once I willed to destroy it. It seemed at first I could make better use of the property than you. The temptation was big, but I held my own, and now I've no fear of meeting anyone in Heaven or Hell. I've told you all. . . ."

"Not quite all. There's one thing more. The thought of Junia Shale made me want to burn the second will, and I almost did it; but I'm glad I didn't."

"If you had, and had married her, you wouldn't have been happy. You can't be fooling a wife and be safe."

"I guess I know that—just in time. . . . I have a bad heart, Carnac. Your property came to me against my will through your father, but I wanted the girl you're going to marry, and against my will you won her. I fought for her. I thought there was a chance for me, because of the rumour you were secretly married—"

"I'll tell you about it, Tarboe, now. It was an ugly business." And he told in a dozen sentences the story of Luzanne and the false marriage.

When he had finished, Tarboe held out his hand. "It was a close shave, Carnac."

After a few further remarks, Tarboe said: "I thought there was a chance for me with Junia Shale, but there never was a real one, for she was yours from a child. You won her fairly, Carnac. If you'll come to the office to-morrow morning, I'll show you the will."

"You'll show me the will?" asked Carnac with an edge to his tone.

"What do you mean?" Tarboe did not like the look in the other's eyes.

"I mean, what you have you shall keep, and what John Grier leaves me by that will, I will not keep."

"You will inherit, and you shall keep."

"And turn you out!" remarked Carnac ironically. "I needn't be turned out. I hoped you'd keep me as manager. Few could do it as well, and, as Member of Parliament, you haven't time yourself. I'll stay as manager at twenty thousand dollars a year, if you like."

Carnac could not tell him the real reason for declining to inherit, but that did not matter. Yet there flashed into his heart a love, which he had never felt so far in his life, for John Grier. The old man had believed he would come out right in the end, and so had left him the fortune in so odd a way. How Carnac longed to tell Tarboe the whole truth about Barode Barouche, and yet dare not! After a short time of hesitation and doubt, Carnac said firmly:

"I'll stand by the will, if you'll be my partner and manager, Tarboe. If you'll take half the business and manage the whole of it, I'll sell the half for a dollar to you, and we can run together to the end."

Tarboe's face lighted; there was triumph in his eyes. It was all better than he had dared to hope, for he liked the business, and he loathed the way the world had looked at John Grier's will.

"Halves, pardner, halves!" he said, assenting gladly, and held out his hand.

They clasped hands warmly.

The door opened and Junia appeared. She studied their faces anxiously. When she saw the smiling light in them:

"Oh, you two good men!" she said joyously, and held out a hand to each.

ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

Don't be a bigger fool than there's any need to be
Life is only futile to the futile
Youth's a dream, middle age a delusion, old age a mistake

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