

The Beauty and the Bolshevik eBook

The Beauty and the Bolshevik by Alice Duer Miller

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[Illustration: "I beg your pardon. Is this a private raft?"]

THE BEAUTY AND THE BOLSHEVIST

By Alice Duer Miller Author of " _ The Charm School _ " "Ladies must Live" "Come out of the Kitchen" etc.

Illustrated

1920

ILLUSTRATIONS

"I beg your pardon. Is this a private raft?"

"Mr. Moreton, the Newport boat leaves at five-thirty"

"I'll be there in five minutes, in a little blue car"

"Suppose you find you do hate being poor?"

THE BEAUTY AND THE BOLSHEVIST

CHAPTER I

The editor of that much-abused New York daily, *Liberty*, pushed back his editorial typewriter and opened one letter in the pile which the office-boy—no respecter of persons—had just laid upon the desk while whistling a piercing tune between his teeth.

The letter said:



Dear Ben,—I hate to think what your feelings will be on learning that I am engaged to be married to a daughter of the capitalistic class. Try to overcome your prejudices, however, and judge Eugenia as an individual and not as a member of a class. She has very liberal ideas, reads your paper, and is content to go with me to Monroe College and lead the life of an instructor's wife. You will be glad to know that Mr. Cord disapproves as much as you do, and will not give his daughter a cent, so that our life will be as hard on the physical side as you in your most affectionate moments could desire. Mr. Cord is under the impression that lack of an income will cool my ardor. You see he could not think worse of me if he were my own brother.

Yours,

David.

The fine face of the editor darkened. It was the face of an idealist—the deep-set, slowly changing eyes, the high cheek bones, but the mouth closed firmly, almost obstinately, and contradicted the rest of the face with a touch of aggressiveness, just as in Lincoln's face the dreamer was contradicted by the shrewd, practical mouth. He crossed his arms above the elbow so that one long hand dangled on one side of his knees and one on the other—a favorite pose of his—and sat thinking.

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The editor was often called a Bolshevik—as who is not in these days? For language is given us not only to conceal thought, but often to prevent it, and every now and then when the problems of the world become too complex and too vital, some one stops all thought on a subject by inventing a tag, like “witch” in the seventeenth century, or “Bolshevist” in the twentieth.

Ben Moreton was not a Bolshevik; indeed, he had written several editorials to show that, in his opinion, their doctrines were not sound, but of course the people who denounced him never thought of reading his paper. He was a socialist, a believer in government ownership, and, however equably he attempted to examine any dispute between capital and labor, he always found for labor. He was much denounced by ultraconservatives, and perhaps their instinct was sound, for he was educated, determined, and possessed of a personality that attached people warmly, so that he was more dangerous than those whose doctrines were more militant. He was not wholly trusted by the extreme radicals. His views were not consistently agreeable to either group. For instance, he believed that the conscientious objectors were really conscientious, a creed for which many people thought he ought to be deported. On the other hand, he doubted that Wall Street had started the war for its own purposes, a skepticism which made some of his friends think him just fit for a bomb.

The great problem of his life was how to hold together a body of liberals so that they could be effective. This problem was going to be immensely complicated by the marriage of his brother with the daughter of a conspicuous capitalist like William Cord.

He pushed the buzzer on his desk and wrote out the following telegram:

David Moreton, Care William Cord, Newport, R.I.

Am taking boat Newport to-night. Meet me.

Ben.

No one answered his buzzer, but presently a boy came in collecting copy, and Moreton said to him:

“Here, get this sent, and ask Klein to come here. He’s in the composing room.”

And presently Mr. Klein entered, in the characteristic dress of the newspaper man—namely, shirt sleeves and a green shade over his eyes.

“Look here, Ben!” he exclaimed in some excitement. “Here’s a thousand-dollar check just come in for the strike fund. How’s that for the second day?”

“Good enough,” said Ben, who would ordinarily have put in a good hour rejoicing over such unexpected good fortune, but whose mind was now on other things. “I have to go

out of town to-night. You'll be here, won't you, to lock the presses? And, see here, Leo, what is the matter with our book page?"

"Pretty rotten page," replied Klein.

"I should say it was—all about taxes and strikes and economic crises. I told Green never to touch those things in the book reviews. Our readers get all they want of that from us in the news and the editorials—hotter, better stuff, too. I've told him not to touch 'em in the book page, and he runs nothing else. He ought to be beautiful—ought to talk about fairies, and poetry, and twelfth-century art. What's the matter with him?"

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"He doesn't know anything," said Klein. "That's his trouble. He's clever, but he doesn't know much. I guess he only began to read books a couple years ago. They excite him too much. He wouldn't read a fairy story. He'd think he was wasting time."

"Get some one to help him out."

"Who'd I get?"

"Look about. I've got to go home and pack a bag. Ask Miss Cox what time that Newport boat leaves."

"Newport! Great heavens, Ben! What is this? A little week-end?"

"A little weak brother, Leo."

"David in trouble again?"

Moreton nodded. "He thinks he's going to marry William Cord's daughter."

Klein, who was Ben's friend as well as his assistant, blanched at the name.

"Cord's daughter!" he exclaimed, and if he had said Jack-the-ripper's, he could not have expressed more horror. "Now isn't it queer," he went on, musingly, "that David, brought up as he has been, can see anything to attract him in a girl like that?"

Ben was tidying his desk preparatory to departure—that is to say, he was pushing all the papers far enough back to enable him to close the roller top, and he answered, absently:

"Oh, I suppose they're all pretty much the same—girls."

"Why, what do you mean?" said Leo, reproachfully. "How can a girl who's been brought up to be a parasite—to display the wealth of her father and husband, and has never done a useful thing since she was born—Why, a woman was telling me the other day—I got caught in a block in the subway and she was next me—awfully interesting, she was. She sewed in one of these fashionable dressmaking establishments—and the things she told me about what those women spend on their clothes—underclothes and furs and everything. Now there must be something wrong with a woman who can spend money on those things when she knows the agony of poverty right around her. You can't compare that sort of woman with a self-respecting, self-supporting girl—"

At this moment the door opened and Miss Cox entered. She wore a short-sleeved, low-neck, pink-satin blouse, a white-satin skirt, open-work stockings, and slippers so high in the heels that her ankles turned inward. Her hair was treated with henna and piled untidily on the top of her head. She was exactly what Klein had described—a self-



respecting, self-supporting girl, but, on a superficial acquaintance, men of Cord's group would have thought quite as badly of her as Klein did of fashionable women. They would have been mistaken. Miss Cox supported her mother, and, though only seventeen, denied herself all forms of enjoyment except dress and an occasional movie. She was conscientious, hard-working, accurate, and virtuous. She loved Ben, whom she regarded as wise, beautiful, and generous, but she would have died rather than have him or anyone know it.

She undulated into the room, dropped one hip lower than the other, placed her hand upon it and said, with a good deal of enunciation:

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"Oh, Mr. Moreton, the Newport boat leaves at five-thirty."

"Thank you very much, Miss Cox," said Ben, gravely, and she went out again.

[Illustration: "Mr. Moreton, the Newport boat leaves at five-thirty"]

"It would be a terrible thing for Dave to make a marriage like that," Klein went on as soon as she had gone, "getting mixed up with those fellows. And it would be bad for you, Ben—"

"I don't mean to get mixed up with them," said Ben.

"No, I mean having Dave do it. It would kill the paper; it would endanger your whole position; and as for leadership, you could never hope—"

"Now, look here, Leo. You don't think I can stop my brother's marrying because it might be a poor connection for me? The point is that it wouldn't be good for Dave—to be a poorly tolerated hanger-on. That's why I'm going hot-foot to Newport. And while I'm away do try to do something about the book page. Get me a culture-hound—get one of these Pater specialists from Harvard. Or," he added, with sudden inspiration when his hand was already on the door, "get a woman—she'd have a sense of beauty and would know how to jolly Green into agreeing with her." And with this the editor was gone.

It was the end of one of those burning weeks in August that New York often knows. The sun went down as red as blood every evening behind the Palisades, and before the streets and roofs had ceased to radiate heat the sun was up again above Long Island Sound, as hot and red as ever. As Ben went uptown in the Sixth Avenue Elevated he could see pale children hanging over the railings of fire escapes, and behind them catch glimpses of dark, crowded rooms which had all the disadvantages of caves without the coolness. But to-day he was too concentrated on his own problem to notice.

Since Ben's sixteenth year his brother David had been dependent on him. Their father had been professor of economics in a college in that part of the United States which Easterners describe as the "Middle West." In the gay days when muck-raking was at its height Professor Moreton had lost his chair because he had denounced in his lecture room financial operations which to-day would be against the law. At that time they were well thought of, and even practiced by the eminent philanthropist who had endowed the very chair which Moreton occupied. The trustees felt that it was unkind and unnecessary to complicate their already difficult duties by such tactlessness, and their hearts began to turn against Moreton, as most of our hearts turn against those who make life too hard for us. Before long they asked him to resign on account of his age—he was just sixty and extremely vigorous; but immediately afterward, having been deeply surprised and hurt, he did what Goldsmith recommends to lovely woman under

not dissimilar circumstances—he died. He left his two young sons—he had married late in life—absolutely unprovided for.

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Ben, the elder of the two, was sixteen, and just ready for college; but he could not give four precious years to an academic degree. He went to work. With the background of an educated environment and a very sound knowledge of economic questions, breathed in from his earliest days, he found a place at once on a new paper—or, rather, on an old paper just being converted into a new organ of liberalism—*Liberty*. It was independent in politics, and was supposed to be independent in economic questions, but by the time Ben worked up to the editorship it was well recognized to be an anticapitalist sheet. The salary of its editor, though not large, was sufficient to enable him to send his younger brother through college, with the result that David, a little weak, a little self-indulgent, a little—partly through physical causes—disinclined to effort, was now a poet, a classicist and an instructor in a fresh-water college. Ben made him an allowance to enable him to live—the college not thinking this necessary for its instructors. But during the war Ben had not been able to manage the allowance, because, to the surprise of many of his friends, Ben had volunteered early.

Although the reasons for doing this seemed absurdly simple to him, the decision had been a difficult one. He was a pacifist—saw no virtue in war whatsoever. He wished to convert others to his opinion—unlike many reformers who prefer to discuss questions only with those who already agree with them. He argued that the speeches of a man who had been through war, or, better still, the posthumous writings of one who has been killed in war, would have more weight with the public than the best logic of one who had held aloof. But his radical friends felt that he was using this argument merely as an excuse for choosing the easy path of conformity, while the few ultraconservatives who mentioned the matter at all assumed that he had been drafted against his will. Afterward, when the war was over and his terrible book, *War*, appeared, no one was pleased, for the excellent reason that it was published at a moment when the whole world wanted to forget war entirely. The pay of a private, however, had not allowed him to continue David's allowance, and so David, displaying unusual energy, had found a job for himself as tutor for the summer to William Cord's son. Ben had not quite approved of a life that seemed to him slightly parasitical, but it was healthy and quiet and, above everything, David had found it for himself, and initiative was so rare in the younger man that Ben could not bear to crush it with disapproval.

Increasingly, during the two years he was in France, Ben was displeased by David's letters. The Cords were described as kindly, well-educated people, fond one of another, considerate of the tutor, with old-fashioned traditions of American liberties. Ben asked himself if he would have been better pleased if David's employers had been cruel, vulgar, and blatant, and found the answer was in the affirmative. It would, he thought, have been a good deal safer for David's integrity if he had not been so comfortable.

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For two summers Ben had made no protest, but the third summer, when the war was over and the allowance again possible, he urged David not to go back to Newport. David flatly refused to yield. He said he saw no reason why he should go on taking Ben's money when this simple way of earning a full living was open to him. Wasn't Ben's whole theory that everyone should be self-supporting? Why not be consistent?

Ignorant people might imagine that two affectionate brothers could not quarrel over an issue purely affectionate. But the Moretons did quarrel—more bitterly than ever before, and that is saying a great deal. With the extraordinary tenacity of memory that develops under strong emotion, they each contrived to recall and to mention everything which the other had done that was wrong, ridiculous, or humiliating since their earliest days. They parted with the impression on David's part that Ben thought him a self-indulgent grafter, and on Ben's side that David thought him a bully solely interested in imposing his will on those unfortunate enough to be dependent on him.

It was after half past four when, having walked up five flights of stairs, he let himself into his modest flat on the top floor of an old-fashioned brownstone house. As he opened the door, he called,

"Nora!"

No beautiful partner of a free-love affair appeared, but an elderly woman in spectacles who had once been Professor Moreton's cook, and now, doing all the housework for Ben, contrived to make him so comfortable that the editor of a more radical paper than his own had described the flat as "a bourgeois interior."

"Nora," said Ben, "put something in my bag for the night—I'm going to Newport in a few minutes."

He had expected a flood of questions, for Nora was no looker-on at life, and he was surprised by her merely observing that she was glad he was getting away from the heat. The truth was that she knew far more about David than he did. She had consistently coddled David since his infancy, and he told her a great deal. Besides, she took care of his things when he was at Ben's. She had known of sachets, photographs, and an engraved locket that he wore on his watch-chain. She was no radical. She had seen disaster come upon the old professor and attributed it, not to the narrowness of the trustees, but to the folly of the professor. She disapproved of most of Ben's friends, and would have despised his paper if she ever read it. The only good thing about it in her estimation was, he seemed to be able "to knock a living out of it"—a process which Nora regarded with a sort of gay casualness. She did not blame him for making so little money and thus keeping her housekeeping cramped, but she never in her own mind doubted that it would be far better if he had more. The idea that David was about to marry money seemed to her simply the reward of virtue—her own virtue in bringing David up so well. She knew that Mr. Cord opposed the marriage, but she supposed that

Ben would arrange all that. She had great confidence in Ben. Still he was very young, very young, so she gave him a word of advice as she put his bag into his hand.

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"Don't take any nonsense. Remember you're every bit as good as they. Only don't, for goodness' sake, Mr. Ben, talk any of your ideas to them. A rich man like Mr. Cord wouldn't like that."

Ben laughed. "How would you like me to bring you home a lovely heiress of my own?" he said.

She took a thread off his coat. "Only don't let her come interfering in my kitchen," she said, and hurried him away. He had a good deal of courage, but he had not enough to tell Nora he was going to Newport to stop her darling's marriage.

The Newport boat gets to Newport about two o'clock in the morning, and experienced travelers, if any such choose this method of approach, go on to Fall River and take a train back to Newport, arriving in time for a comfortable nine-o'clock breakfast. But Ben was not experienced, and he supposed that when you took a boat for Newport and reached Newport the thing to do was to get off the boat.

It had been a wonderful night on the Sound, and Ben had not been to bed, partly because, applying late on a Friday evening, he had not been able to get a room, but partly because the moon and the southerly breeze and the silver shores of Long Island and the red and white lighthouses had been too beautiful to leave. Besides, he had wanted to think out carefully what he was going to say to his brother.

To separate a man from the woman he loves, however unwisely, has some of the same disadvantages as offering a bribe—one respects the other person less in proportion as one succeeds. What, Ben said to himself, could he urge against a girl he did not know? Yet, on the other hand, if he had known her, his objections would have seemed regrettably personal. Either way, it was difficult to know what to say. He wondered what Cord had said, and smiled to think that here was one object for which he and Cord were co-operating—only Cord would never believe it. That was one trouble with capitalists—they always thought themselves so damned desirable. And Ben did not stop to inquire how it was that capitalists had gained this impression.

On the pier he looked about for David, but there was no David. Of course the boy had overslept, or hadn't received his telegram—Ben said this to himself, but somehow the vision of David comfortably asleep in a luxurious bed in the Cords's house irritated him.

His meditations were broken in upon by a negro boy with an open hack, who volunteered to "take him up for fifty cents." It sounded reasonable. Ben got in and they moved slowly down the narrow pier, the horses' hoofs clumping lazily on the wooden pavement. Turning past the alley of Thames Street, still alight at three o'clock in the morning, Ben stopped at the suggestion of his driver and left his bag at a hotel, and then they went on up the hill, past the tower of the Skeleton in Armor, past old houses with tall, pillared porticoes, reminiscent of the days when the South patronized Newport,

and turned into Bellevue Avenue—past shops with names familiar to Fifth Avenue, past a villa with bright-eyed owls on the gateposts, past many large, silent houses and walled gardens.

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The air was very cool, and now and then the scent of some flowering bush trailed like a visible cloud across their path. Then suddenly the whole avenue was full of little red lights, like the garden in “Faust” when Mephistopheles performs his magic on it. Here and there the huge headlights of a car shone on the roadway, magnifying every rut in the asphalt, and bringing out strange, vivid shades in the grass and the hydrangea bushes. They were passing a frowning palace set on a piece of velvet turf as small as a pocket handkerchief—so small that the lighted windows were plainly visible from the road.

“Stop,” said Ben to his driver. He had suddenly realized how long it must be before he could rouse the Cord household.

He paid his driver, got out, and made his way up the driveway toward the house. Groups of chauffeurs were standing about their cars—vigorous, smartly dressed men, young for the most part. Ben wondered if it were possible that they were content with the present arrangement, and whether their wives and children were not stifling in the city at that very moment. He caught a sentence here and there as he passed. “And, believe me,” one was saying, “as soon as he got into the box he did not do a thing to that fellar from Tiverton—” Ben’s footsteps lagged a little. He was a baseball fan. He almost forgave the chauffeurs for being content. They seemed to him human beings, after all.

He approached the house, and, walking past a narrow, unroofed piazza, he found himself opposite a long window. He looked straight into the ballroom. The ball was a fancy ball—the best of the season. It was called a Balkan Ball, which gave all the guests the opportunity of dressing pretty much as they pleased. The wood of the long paneled room was golden, and softened the light from the crystal appliques along the wall, and set off the bright dresses of the dancers as a gold bowl sets off the colors of fruit.

Every now and then people stepped out on the piazza, and as they did they became audible to Ben for a few seconds. First, two middle-aged men, solid, bronzed, laughing rather wickedly together. Ben drew back, afraid of what he might overhear, but it turned out to be no very guilty secret. “My dear fellow,” one was saying, “I gave him a stroke a hole, and he’s twenty years younger than I am—well, fifteen anyhow. The trouble with these young men is that they lack—”

Ben never heard what it was that young men lacked.

Next came a boy and a girl, talking eagerly, the girl’s hand gesticulating at her round, red lips. Ben had no scruples in overhearing them—theirs appeared to be the universal secret. But here again he was wrong. She was saying: “Round and round—not up and down. My dentist says that if you always brush them round and round—”

Then two young men—boys, with cigarettes drooping from their lips; they were saying, “I haven’t pitched a game since before the war, but he said to go in and get that Tiverton fellow, and so—” Ben saw that he was in the presence of the hero of the late game. He forgave him, too.

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As a matter of fact, he had never given the fashionable world enough attention to hate it. He knew that Leo Klein derived a very revivifying antagonism from reading about it, and often bought himself an entrance to the opera partly because he loved music, but partly, Ben always thought, because he liked to look up at the boxes and hate the occupants for their jewels and inattention. But Ben watched the spectacle with as much detachment as he would have watched a spring dance among the Indians.

And then suddenly his detachment melted away, for a lovely girl came through the window—lovely with that particular and specific kind of loveliness which Ben thought of when he used the word—*his* kind. He used to wonder afterward how he had known it at that first glimpse, for, in the dim light of the piazza, he could not see some of her greatest beauties—the whiteness of her skin, white as milk where her close, fine, brown hair began, or the blue of the eyes set at an angle which might have seemed Oriental in eyes less enchanting turquoise in color. But he could see her slenderness and grace. She was dressed in clinging blues and greens and she wore a silver turban. She leaned her hands on the railings—she turned them out along the railings; they were slender and full of character—not soft. Ben looked at the one nearest him. With hardly more than a turn of his head he could have kissed it. The idea appealed to him strongly; he played with it, just as when he was a child in a college town he had played with the idea of getting up in church and walking about on the backs of the pews. This would be pleasanter, and the subsequent getaway even easier. He glanced at the dark lawn behind him; there appeared to be no obstacle to escape.

Perhaps, under the spell of her attraction for him, and the knowledge that he would never see her again, he might actually have done it, but she broke the trance by speaking to a tall, stolid young man who was with her.

“No, Eddie,” she said, as if answering something he had said some time ago, “I really was at home, at just the time I said, only this new butler does hate you so—”

“You might speak to him about it—you might even get rid of him,” replied the young man, in the tone of one deeply imposed upon.

“Good butlers are so rare nowadays.”

“And are devoted friends so easy to find?”

“No, but a good deal easier than butlers, Eddie dear.”

The young man gave an exclamation of annoyance. “Let us find some place out of the way. I want to speak to you seriously—” he began, and they moved out of earshot—presumably to a secluded spot of Eddie’s choosing.

When they had gone Ben felt distinctly lonely, and, what was more absurd, slighted, as if Eddie had deliberately taken the girl away from him—out of reach. How silly, he thought, for Eddie to want to talk to her, when it was so clear the fellow did not know how to talk to her. How silly to say, in the sulky tone, “Are devoted friends so easy to find?” Of course they were—for a girl like that—devoted friends, passionate lovers, and sentimental idiots undoubtedly blocked her path.

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It might have been some comfort to him to know that in the remote spot of his own choosing, a stone bench under a purple beech, Eddie was simply going from bad to worse.

"Dear Crystal," he began, with that irritating reasonableness of manner which implies that the speaker is going to be reasonable for two, "I've been thinking over the situation. I know that you don't love me, but then I don't believe you will ever be deeply in love with any one. I don't think you are that kind of woman."

"Oh, Eddie, how dreadful!"

"I don't see that at all. Just as well, perhaps. You don't want to get yourself into such a position as poor Eugenia."

"I do, I would. I'd give anything to be as much in love as Eugenia."

"What? With a fellow like that! A complete outsider."

"Outside of what? The human race?"

"Well, no," said Eddie, as if he were yielding a good deal, "but outside of your traditions and your set."

"My set! Good for him to be outside of it, I say. What have they ever done to make anyone want to be inside of it? Why, David is an educated gentleman. To hear him quote Horace—"

"Horace who?"

"Really, Eddie."

"Oh, I see. You mean the poet. That's nothing to laugh at, Crystal. It was a natural mistake. I thought, of course, you meant some of those anarchists who want to upset the world."

Crystal looked at him more honestly and seriously than she had yet done.

"Well, don't you think there *is* something wrong with the present arrangement of things, Eddie?"

"No, I don't, and I hate to hear you talk like a socialist."

"I am a socialist."

"You're nothing of the kind."

"I suppose I know what I am."

"Not at all—not at all."

"I certainly think the rich are too rich, while the poor are so horridly poor."

"*You'd* get on well without your maid and your car and your father's charge accounts at all the shops, wouldn't you?"

Though agreeable to talk seriously if you agree, it is correspondingly dangerous if you disagree. Crystal stood up, trembling with an emotion which Eddie, although he was rather angry himself, considered utterly unaccountable.

"Yes," she said, almost proudly, "I *am* luxurious, I *am* dependent on those things. But whose fault is that? It's the way I was brought up—it's all wrong. But, even though I am dependent on them, I believe I could exist without them. I'd feel like killing myself if I didn't think so. Sometimes I want to go away and find out if I couldn't live and be myself without all this background of luxury. But at the worst—I'm just one girl—suppose I were weak and couldn't get on without them? That wouldn't prove that they are right. I'm not so blinded that I can't see that a system by which I profit may still be absolutely wrong. But you always seem to think, Eddie, that it's part of the Constitution of the United States that you should have everything you've always had."

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Eddie rose, too, with the manner of a man who has allowed things to go far enough. "Look here, my dear girl," he said, "I am a man and I'm older than you, and have seen more of the world. I know you don't mean any harm, but I must tell you that this is very wicked, dangerous talk."

"Dangerous, perhaps, Eddie, but I can't see how it can be wicked to want to give up your special privileges."

"Where in the world do you pick up ideas like this?"

"I inherited them from an English ancestor of mine, who gave up all that he had when he enlisted in Washington's army."

"You got that stuff," said Eddie, brushing this aside, "from David Moreton, and that infernal seditious paper his brother edits—and that white-livered book which I haven't read against war. I'd like to put them all in jail."

"It's a pity," said Crystal, "that your side can't think of a better argument than putting everyone who disagrees with you in jail."

With this she turned and left him, and, entering the ballroom, flung herself into the arms of the first partner she met. It was a timid boy, who, startled by the eagerness with which she chose him, with her bright eyes and quickly drawn breath, was just coming to the conclusion that a lovely, rich, and admired lady, had fallen passionately in love with him, when with equal suddenness she stepped out of his arms and was presently driving her small, open car down the avenue.

Under the purple beech Eddie, left alone, sank back on the stone bench and considered, somewhat as the persecutors of Socrates may have done, suitable punishments for those who put vile, revolutionary ideas into the heads of young and lovely women.

In the meantime Ben, who had enjoyed the party more than most of the invited guests, and far more than the disconsolate Eddie, had left his vantage point at the window. He had suddenly become aware of a strange light stealing under the trees, and, looking up, he saw with surprise that the stars were growing small and the heavens turning steel-color—in fact, that it was dawn.

Convinced that sunrise was a finer sight than the end of the grandest ball that ever was given, he made his way down a shabby back lane, and before long came out on the edge of the cliffs, with the whole panorama of sunrise over the Atlantic spread out before him.

He stood there a moment, somebody's close, well-kept lawn under his feet, and a pale-pink sea sucking in and out on the rocks a hundred feet below. The same hot, red sun

was coming up; there wasn't a steady breeze, but cool salt puffs came to him now and then with a breaking wave. It was going to be a hot day, and Ben liked swimming better than most things in life. He hesitated.

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If he had turned to the left, he would have come presently to a public beach and would have had his swim conventionally and in due time. But some impulse told him to turn to the right, and he began to wander westward along the edge of the cliffs—always on his left hand, space and the sea, and on his right, lawns or gardens or parapets crowned by cactus plants in urns, and behind these a great variety of houses—French chateaux and marble palaces and nice little white cottages, and, finally, a frowning Gothic castle. All alike seemed asleep, with empty piazzas and closed shutters, and the only sign of life he saw in any of them was one pale housemaid shaking a duster out of a window in an upper gable.

At last he came to a break in the cliffs—a cove, with a beach in it, a group of buildings obviously bathing-houses. The sacredness of this pavilion did not occur to Ben; indeed, there was nothing to suggest it. He entered it light-heartedly and was discouraged to find the door of every cabin securely locked. The place was utterly deserted. But Ben was persistent, and presently he detected a bit of a garment hanging over a door, and, pulling it out, he found himself in possession of a man's bathing suit. A little farther on he discovered a telephone room unlocked. Here he undressed and a minute later was swimming straight out to sea.

The level rays of the sun were doing to the water just what the headlights of the motors had done to the road; they were enlarging every ripple and edging the deep purple-blue with yellow light. Except for a fishing dory chunking out to its day's work, Ben had the sea and land to himself. He felt as if they were all his own, and, for a socialist, was guilty of the sin of pride of possession. He was enjoying himself so much that it was a long time before he turned to swim back.

He was swimming with his head under water most of the time so that he did not at once notice that a raft he had passed on his way out was now occupied. As soon as he did see it his head came up. It was a female figure, and even from a distance he could see that she was unconscious of his presence and felt quite as sure of having the world to herself as he was. She was sitting on the edge of the raft, kicking a pair of the prettiest legs in the world in and out of the water. They were clad in the thinnest of blue-silk stockings, the same in which a few minutes before she had been dancing, but not being able to find any others in her bathhouse, she had just kept them on, recklessly ignoring the inevitable problem of what she should wear home. She was leaning back on her straightened arms, with her head back, looking up into the sky and softly whistling to herself. Ben saw in a second that she was the girl of the silver turban.

He stole nearer and nearer, cutting silently through the water, and then, when he had looked his fill, he put his head down again, splashed a little, and did not look up until his hand was on the raft, when he allowed an expression of calm surprise to appear on his face.

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"I beg your pardon," he said. "Is this a private raft?"

The young lady, who had had plenty of time since the splash to arrange her countenance, looked at him with a blank coldness, and then suddenly smiled.

"I thought it was a private world," she replied.

"It's certainly a very agreeable one," said Ben, climbing on the raft. "And what I like particularly about it is the fact that no one is alive but you and me. Newport appears to be a city of the dead."

"It always was," she answered, contemptuously.

"Oh, come. Not an hour ago you were dancing in blue and green and a silver turban at a party over there," and he waved his hand in the direction from which he had come.

"Did you think it was a good ball?"

"I enjoyed it," he answered, truthfully.

Her face fell. "How very disappointing," she said. "I didn't see you there."

"Disappointing that you did not see me there?"

"No," she replied, and then, less positively; "No; I meant it was disappointing that you were the kind of man who went to parties—and enjoyed them."

"It would be silly to go if you didn't enjoy them," he returned, lightly.

She turned to him very seriously. "You're right," she said; "it is silly—very silly, and it's just what I do. I consider parties like that the lowest, emptiest form of human entertainment. They're dull; they're expensive; they keep you from doing intelligent things, like studying; they keep you from doing simple, healthy things, like sleeping and exercising; they make you artificial; they make you civil to people you despise—they make women, at least, for we must have partners—"

"But why do you go, then?"

She was silent, and they looked straight and long at each other. Then she said, gravely:

"The answer's very humiliating. I go because I haven't anything else to do."

He did not reassure her. “Yes, that’s bad,” he said, after a second. “But of course you could not expect to have anything else to do when all your time is taken up like that. ‘When the half gods go,’ you know, ‘the gods arrive.’”

The quotation was not new to Crystal; in fact, she had quoted it to Eddie not very long before, apropos of another girl to whom he had shown a mild attention, but it seemed to her as if she took in for the first time its real meaning. Whether it was the dawn, exhaustion, a stimulating personality, love, or mere accident, the words now came to her with all the beauty and truth of a religious conviction. They seemed to shake her and make her over. She felt as if she could never be sufficiently grateful to the person who had thus made all life fresh and new to her.

“Ah,” she said, very gently, “that’s it. I see. You won’t believe me, but I assure you from now on I mean to be entirely different.”

“Please, not too different.”

“Oh yes, yes, as different as possible. I’ve been so unhappy, and unhappy about nothing definite—that’s the worst kind, only that I have not liked the life I was leading.”

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She glanced at him appealingly. She had tried to tell this simple story to so many people, for she had many friends, and yet no one had ever really understood. Some had told her she was spoiled, more, that there was no use in trying to change her life because she would soon marry; most of them had advised her to marry and find out what real trouble was. Now, as she spoke she saw that this strange young man from the sea not only understood her discontent, but thought it natural, almost commonplace.

She poured it all out. "Only the worst thing," she ended, "is that I'm not really any good. There isn't anything else that I know how to do."

"I doubt that," he answered, and she began to doubt it, too. "I'm sure there are lots of things you could do if you put your mind on it. Did you ever try to write?"

Now, indeed, she felt sure that he was gifted with powers more than mortal—to have guessed this secret which no one else had ever suspected. She colored deeply.

"Why, yes," she answered, "I think I can—a little, only I've so little education."

"So little education?"

"Yes, I belong to the cultivated classes—three languages and nothing solid."

"Well, you know, three languages seem pretty solid to me," said Ben, who had wrestled very unsuccessfully with the French tongue. "You speak three languages, and let me see, you know a good deal about painting and poetry and jade and Chinese porcelains?"

She shrugged her shoulders contemptuously. "Oh, of course everyone knows about those things, but what good are they?"

They were a good deal of good to Ben. He pressed on toward his final goal. "What is your attitude toward fairies?" he asked, and Miss Cox would have heard in his tone a faint memory of his voice when he engaged a new office-boy.

Her attitude toward fairies was perfectly satisfactory, and he showed so much appreciation that she went on and told him her great secret in full. She had once had something published and been paid money for it—fifteen dollars—and probably never in her life had she spoken of any sum with so much respect. It had been, well, a sort of a review of a new illustrated edition of Hans Andersen's Tales, treating them as if they were modern stories, commenting on them from the point of view of morals and probability—making fun of people who couldn't give themselves up to the charm of a story unless it tallied with their own horrid little experiences of life. She told it, she said, very badly, but perhaps he could get the idea.

He got it perfectly. "Good," he said. "I'll give you a job. I'm a newspaper editor."

“Oh,” she exclaimed, “you’re not Mr. Munsey, are you, or Mr. Reid, or Mr. Ochs?”

Her knowledge of newspaper owners seemed to come to a sudden end.

“No,” he answered, smiling, “nor even Mr. Hearst. I did not say I owned a newspaper. I edit it. I need some one just like you for my book page, only you’d have to come to New York and work hard, and there wouldn’t be very much salary. Can you work?”

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"Anyone can."

"Well, will you?"

"Indeed I will." (It was a vow.) "And now I must go. I have to drive myself home in an open car, and the tourists do stare at one so—in fancy dress."

"Yes, but when am I to see you again? I leave Newport to-night."

"Telephone me—2079—and we'll arrange to do something this afternoon."

"And whom shall I ask for?"

"Telephone at two-fifteen to the minute, and I'll answer the telephone myself."

She evidently rather enjoyed the mystery of their not knowing each other's names. But a black idea occurred to Ben. She had slid off the raft and swum a few strokes before he shouted to her:

"Look here. Your name isn't Eugenia, is it?"

She waved her hand. "No, I'm Crystal," she called back.

"Good-by, Crystal."

This time she did not wave, but, swimming on her side with long, easy strokes, she gave him a sweet, reassuring look.

After she had gone he lay down on the raft with his face buried in his arms. A few moments before he had thought he could never see enough of the sunrise and the sea, but now he wanted to shut it out in favor of a much finer spectacle within him. So this was love. Strange that no one had ever been able to prepare you for it. Strange that poets had never been able to give you a hint of its stupendous inevitability. He wondered if all miracles were like that—so simple—so—

Suddenly he heard her voice near him. He lifted his head from his arms. She was there in the water below him, clinging to the raft with one hand.

"I just came back to tell you something," she said. "I thought you ought to know it before things went any farther."

He thought, "Good God! she's in love with some one else!" and the horror of the idea made him look at her severely.

"I'm not perhaps just as I seem—I mean my views are rather liberal. In fact"—she brought it out with an effort—"I'm almost a socialist."

The relief was so great that Ben couldn't speak. He bent his head and kissed the hand that had tempted him a few hours before.

She did not resent his action. Her special technique in such matters was to pretend that such little incidents hardly came into the realm of her consciousness. She said, "At two-fifteen, then," and swam away for good.

Later in the day a gentleman who owned both a bathing house and a bathing suit on Bailey's beach was showing the latter possession to a group of friends.

"No one can tell me that Newport isn't damp," he said. "I haven't been in bathing for twenty-four hours, and yet I can actually wring the water out of my suit."

CHAPTER II

That same morning, about ten o'clock, Mr. William Cord was shut up in the study of his house—shut up, that is, as far as entrance from the rest of the house was concerned, but very open as to windows looking out across the grass to the sea. It was a small room, and the leather chairs which made up most of its furnishings were worn, and the bookshelves were filled with volumes like railroad reports and *Poor's Manual*, but somehow the total effect of the room was so agreeable that the family used it more than Mr. Cord liked.

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He was an impressive figure, tall, erect, and with that suggestion of unbroken health which had had something to do with his success in life. His hair must have been of a sandy brown, for it had turned, not gray nor white, but that queer no-color that sandy hair does turn, melting into all pale surroundings. His long face was not vividly colored, either, but was stamped with the immobility of expression that sensitive people in contact with violent life almost always acquire. The result was that there seemed to be something dead about his face until you saw his eyes, dark and fierce, as if all the fire and energy of the man were concentrated in them.

He was dressed in gray golfing-clothes that smelled more of peat than peat does, and, though officially supposed to be wrestling with the more secret part of correspondence which even his own secretary was not allowed to see, he was actually wiggling a new golf-club over the rug, and toying with the romantic idea that it would enable him to drive farther than he had ever driven before.

There was a knock at the door. Mr. Cord leaned the driver in a corner, clasped his hands behind his back, straddled his legs a trifle, so that they seemed to grow out of the rug as the eternal oak grows out of the sod, and said, "Come in," in the tone of a man who, considering the importance of his occupation, bears interruption exceedingly well.

Tomes, the butler, entered. "Mr. Verriman, sir, to see you."

"To see *me*?"

"Yes, sir."

Cord just nodded at this, which evidently meant that the visitor was to be admitted, for Tomes never made a mistake and Verriman presently entered. Mr. Cord had seen Eddie Verriman the night before at the ball, and had thought him a very fine figure of a man, so now, putting two and two together, he said to himself, "Is he here to ask my blessing?"

Aloud he said nothing, but just nodded; it was a belief that had translated itself into a habit—to let the other man explain first.

"I know I'm interrupting you, Mr. Cord," Verriman began. Mr. Cord made a lateral gesture with his hand, as if all he had were at the disposal of his friends, even his most precious asset—time.

"It's something very important," Eddie went on. "I'm worried. I haven't slept. Mr. Cord, have you checked up Crystal's economic beliefs lately?"

"Lately?" said Mr. Cord. "I don't know that I ever have. Have a cigar?"

Eddie waved the cigar aside as if his host had offered it to him in the midst of a funeral service.

“Well, I have,” he said, as if some one had to do a parent’s duty, “and I’ve been very much distressed—shocked. I had a long talk with her about it at the dance last night.”

“About economics?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Why, Eddie, don’t I seem to remember your telling me you were in love with Crystal?”

“Yes, Mr. Cord, I am.”

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"Then what do you want to talk economics for? Or is it done like that nowadays?"

"I don't want to," answered Eddie, almost in a wail. "*She* does. She gets me going and then we quarrel because she has terrible opinions. She talks wildly. I have to point out to her that she's wrong. And last night she told me"—Eddie glanced about to be sure he was not overheard—"she told me that she was a socialist."

Mr. Cord had just lit the very cigar which Eddie had waved away, and he took the first critical puffs at it before he answered:

"Did you ask her what that was?"

"No—no—I didn't."

"Missed a trick there, Eddie."

It was impossible to accuse so masklike a magnate of frivolity, but Eddie was often dissatisfied with Mr. Cord's reactions to the serious problems of life.

"But don't you think it's terrible," he went on, eagerly, "for Crystal to be a socialist? In this age of the world—civilization trembling on the brink—chaos"—Eddie made a gesture toward the perfectly ordered shelves containing *Poor's Manual*—"staring us in the face? You say that the half-baked opinions of an immature girl make no difference?"

"No, I shouldn't say that—at least not to Crystal," murmured her father.

"But the mere fact that she picks up such ideas proves that they are in the air about us and that terrifies me—terrifies me," ended Eddie, his voice rising as he saw that his host intended to remain perfectly calm.

"Which terrifies you, Eddie—Crystal or the revolution?"

"The general discontent—the fact that civilization is tr—"

"Oh yes, that," said Mr. Cord, hastily. "Well, I wouldn't allow that to terrify me, Eddie. I should have more sympathy with you if it had been Crystal. Crystal is a good deal of a proposition, I grant you. The revolution seems to me simpler. If a majority of our fellow countrymen really want it, they are going to get it in spite of you and me; and if they don't want it, they won't have it no matter how Crystal talks to you at parties. So cheer up, Eddie, and have a cigar."

"They can, they will," said Eddie, not even troubling to wave away the cigar this time. "You don't appreciate what an organized minority of foreign agitators can do in this country. Why, they can—"

“Well, if a minority of foreigners can put over a revolution against the will of the American people, we ought to shut up shop, Eddie.”

“You’re not afraid?”

“No.”

“You mean you wouldn’t fight it?”

“You bet your life I’d fight it,” said Mr. Cord, gayly, “but I fight lots of things without being afraid of them. What’s the use of being afraid? Here I am sixty-five, conservative and trained to only one game, and yet I feel as if I could manage to make my own way even under soviet rule. Anyway, I don’t want to die or emigrate just because my country changes its form of government. Only it would have to be the wish of the majority, and I don’t believe it ever will be. In the meantime there is just one thing I *am* afraid of—and that’s the thing that you and most of my friends want to do first—suppressing free speech; if you suppress it, we won’t know who wants what. Then you really do get an explosion.”

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Eddie had got Mr. Cord to be serious now, with the unfortunate result that the older man was more shocking than ever.

"Free speech doesn't mean treason and sedition," Eddie began.

"It means the other man's opinion."

There was a pause during which Eddie became more perturbed and Mr. Cord settled back to his habitual calm.

"Wouldn't you suppress *anything*?" Verriman asked at length, willing to know the worst. "Not even such a vile sheet as *Liberty*?"

"Do you ever see it, Eddie?"

"Read a rotten paper like that? Certainly not. Do you?"

"I subscribe to it." And, bending down, Mr. Cord unlocked a drawer in his desk and produced the issue of the preceding day.

"I notice you keep it locked up," said Eddie, and felt that he had scored.

"I have to," replied Mr. Cord, "or else Crystal gets hold of it and cuts it all up into extracts—she must have sent you some—before I get a chance to read it. Besides, it shocks Tomes. You ought to talk to Tomes, Eddie. He thinks about as you do—"

At this moment the door opened and Tomes himself entered.

"Mr. Moreton would like to see you, sir."

Even Cord's calm was a little disturbed by this unexpected news.

"Mr. Moreton!" he exclaimed. "Not—not—not—not?"

"No, sir," said Tomes, always in possession of accurate information. "His brother, I believe."

"Show him in here," said Cord, and added to Eddie, as Tomes left the room: "Well, here he is—the editor himself, Eddie. You can say it all to him."

"I don't want to see such fellows," Verriman began.

"Stay and protect me, Eddie. He may have a bomb in his pocket."

"You don't really believe that he's come to—"

“No, Eddie, I don’t. I think he’s come like young Lochinvar—to dance a little late at the wedding. To try to persuade me to accept that lazy, good-looking brother of his as a son-in-law. He’ll have quite a job over that.” Then, as the door opened, Mr. Cord’s eyes concentrated on it and his manner became a shade sharper. “Ah, Mr. Moreton, good morning. Mr. Verriman—Mr. Moreton.”

Ben was a good-looking young man, but it was his expression—at once illuminated and determined—that made him unusual. And the effect of his night and morning had been to intensify this, so that now, as he stood a moment in the doorway, he was a very attractive and compelling figure.

“I came to see my brother, Mr. Cord,” he said, simply, “but I hear he’s not here any more. If I could speak to you alone for a few minutes—” He glanced at Eddie, whom he instantly recognized as the man who had not known how to talk to the woman in the world best worth talking to.

“Oh, you may speak before Mr. Verriman,” said Cord. “He knows the situation—knows your brother—knows my children—knows about you. In fact, we were just speaking about your paper when you came in. However, I must tell you that Mr. Verriman doesn’t approve of *Liberty*. At least, I believe I understood you right, Eddie.” And Mr. Cord, having thus assured himself a few minutes to regain his poise, leaned back comfortably in his chair.

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"What's wrong with the paper, Mr. Verriman?" said Ben, pleasantly.

Eddie did not love the adventure of mental combat, but he was no coward. "It seems to me," he said, "that it preaches such radical changes in our government that it is seditious. To be frank, Mr. Moreton, I think the government ought to suppress it."

"But we don't break the law. The government can't suppress us."

"Then the laws ought to be changed so that it can."

"That's all we advocate, Mr. Verriman, the changing of the law. It isn't any more seditious for me to say it than for you to, is it?"

Of course in Eddie's opinion it was—much, much more seditious. Only somehow it was a difficult point to make clear, if a person was so wrongheaded he couldn't see it for himself. The point was that he, Eddie, was right in wanting the laws changed and Moreton was wrong. Anyone, it seemed to Eddie, would agree to that, unless he happened to agree with Moreton beforehand, and those were just the people who ought to be deported, imprisoned, or even perhaps in rare instances, as examples, strung up to lamp-posts. Only each time he tried to put these very natural opinions in words, they kept sounding wrong and tyrannical and narrow—qualities which Eddie knew he was entirely without. In order to counteract this effect, he tried at first to speak very temperately and calmly, but, unhappily, this only had the effect of making him sound patronizing to Ben's ears.

In short, it was hardly to be expected that the discussion would be amicable, and it was not. Each man began to be angry in his own way. Eddie shouted a little, and Ben expressed himself with turns of phrase quite needlessly insulting. Ben found Verriman's assumption that the profits of capital were bound up with patriotism, family life, and the Christian religion almost as irritating as Verriman found Ben's assumption that the government of labor as a class would be entirely without the faults that have always marked every form of class government.

"And suppose you got socialism," said Eddie, at last, "suppose you did divide everything up equally, don't you suppose that in a few years the clever, strong, industrious men would have it all in their own hands?"

"Very likely," said Ben, "but that would be quite a change from the present arrangement, wouldn't it?"

Mr. Cord had a narrow escape from laughing out loud, which would have cost him the friendship of the man with whom on the whole he really agreed. He thought it was time to interfere.

“This is very interesting, Mr. Moreton,” he said, “but I fancy it wasn’t about the general radical propaganda that you came to see me.”

“No,” said Ben, turning slowly. He felt as a dog feels who is dragged out of the fight just as it begins to get exciting. “No, I came to see you about this unfortunate engagement of my brother’s.”

“Unfortunate?” asked Mr. Cord, without criticism.

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"I should consider it so, and I understand you do, too."

Cord did not move an eyelash; this was an absolutely new form of attack. It had certainly never crossed his mind that any objection could come from the Moreton family.

"You consider it unfortunate?" said Eddie, as if it would be mere insolence on Ben's part to object to his brother's marrying anyone.

"Will you give me your reasons for objecting?" said Cord.

Ben smiled. "You ought to understand them," he said, "for I imagine they're pretty much the same as your own. I mean they are both founded on class consciousness. I feel that it will be destructive to the things I value most in David to be dependent on, or associated with, the capitalistic group. Just as you feel it will be destructive to your daughter to be married to a tutor—a fellow with radical views and a seditious brother—"

"One moment, one moment," said Cord; "you've got this all wrong so far as I'm concerned. I do most emphatically disagree with the radical propaganda. I think the radical is usually just a man who hasn't got something he wants."

"And the conservative is a man who wants to keep something he's got," said Ben, less hostilely than he had spoken to Eddie.

"Exactly, exactly," said Cord. "In ideality there isn't much to choose between them, but, generally speaking, I have more respect for the man who has succeeded in getting something to preserve than for the man who hasn't got anything to lose."

"If their opportunities were equal."

"I say in general. There is not much to choose between the two types; but there is in my opinion a shade in favor of the conservative on the score of efficiency, and I am old-fashioned perhaps, but I like efficiency. If it came to a fight, I should fight on the conservative side. But this is all beside the point. My objections to your brother, Mr. Moreton, are not objections to his group or class. They are personal to him. Damned personal."

"You don't like David?"

"Why, he's an attractive young fellow, but, if you'll forgive my saying so, Mr. Moreton, I don't think he's any good. He's weak, he's idle, he entirely lacks that aggressive will that—whether we have your revolution or not—is the only bulwark a woman has in this world. Why, Mr. Moreton, you are evidently a very much more advanced and dangerous radical than your brother, but I should not have half the objection to you that I have to him. There is only one thing that makes a difference in this world—character. Your brother hasn't got it."

For an instant the perfect accuracy of Cord's statements about David left Ben silent. Then he pulled himself together and said, with a firmness he did not wholly feel:

"You hardly do David justice. He may not have great force, but he has talent, great sweetness, no vices—"

"Oh, quite, quite, quite, quite," said Cord, with a gesture of his long hand that should somehow have recalled to Ben the motion of a hand he had recently kissed.

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"However," said Ben, "there is no use in arguing about our differences. The point is we are agreed that this marriage ought not to be. Let us co-operate on that. Where could I find David? I believe if I could see him I'd have some effect on him."

"You mean you could talk him out of marrying the girl he loves?"

"I might make him see the folly of it."

"Well, I haven't said anything as bad about your brother as that, Mr. Moreton. But you do him injustice. You couldn't talk him out of it, and if you could, she'd talk him right back into it again. But there is one thing to consider. I understand you make him an allowance. How about stopping that?"

"I wouldn't consider that for a moment," said Ben, with more temper than he had so far shown. "I don't make him that allowance so that I can force him to do what I think best. I give it to him because he needs it. I don't believe in force, Mr. Cord."

"Oh yes, you do, Mr. Moreton."

"What do you mean?"

"You were proposing to use a much more pernicious kind of force when you proposed talking the boy out of his first love. However, to be candid with you, I must tell you that the issue is dead. They ran off yesterday and were married in Boston."

There was a short silence and then Ben moved toward the door.

"Won't you stay to lunch?" said Mr. Cord, politely.

"Thank you, no," said Ben. He wanted to be alone. Like all dominating people who don't get their own way in an altruistic issue, his feelings were deeply wounded. He took his hat from the disapproving Toms, and went out to the sea to think. He supposed he was going to think about David's future and the terrible blow his paper had just received.

As the door closed behind him, Eddie turned to Mr. Cord with a world of reproach in his eyes.

"Well," he said, "I must say, sir, I think you were unnecessarily gentle with that fellow."

"Seemed to me a fine young fellow," said Mr. Cord.

"Asking him to lunch," said Eddie.



"I did that for Crystal," replied Cord, getting up and slapping his pockets—a gesture which in some subconscious way he hoped would make Eddie go home. "She's always so keen to meet new people. If she heard that the editor of *Liberty* had been here while she was asleep and that I had not tried to keep him for her to see—whew!—she would make a scene."

"But she oughtn't to see people like that," protested Eddie, as if he were trying to talk sense in a madhouse. "That was what I was just explaining to you, Mr. Cord, when—"

"So you were, Eddie, so you were," said Mr. Cord. "Stay to lunch and tell Crystal. Or, rather," he added, hastily glancing at the clock, "come back to lunch in an hour. I have to go now and see—" Mr. Cord hesitated for the fraction of a second—"the gardener. If you don't see gardeners now and then and let them scold you about the weather and the Lord's arrangement of the seasons, they go mad and beat their wives. See you later, Eddie," and Mr. Cord stepped out through the French window. It was only great crises like these that led him to offer himself up to the attacks of his employees.

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A severe elderly man with a long, flat upper lip and side whiskers immediately sprang apparently from the earth and approached him. He had exactly the manner of resolute gloom that a small boy has when something has gone wrong at school and he wants his mother to drag it out of him.

“Good morning, sir,” he said.

“Morning, McKellar,” said Cord, gayly. “Everything’s all right, I suppose.”

McKellar shook his head. Everything was about as far from all right as it well could be. The cook was a violent maniac who required peas to be picked so young that they weren’t worth the picking. Toms and his footman were a band of malicious pirates who took pleasure in cutting for the table the very buds which McKellar was cherishing for the horticultural show. And as for the season—McKellar could not remember such a devastatingly dry August since he was a lad at home.

“Why, McKellar, we had rain two days ago.”

“You wouldn’t call that little mist rain, sir.”

“And last week a perfect downpour.”

“Ah, that’s the kind doesn’t sink into the soil.” Looking up critically at the heavens, McKellar expressed his settled conviction that in two weeks’ time hardly a blade or a shrub would be alive in the island at Newport.

“Well, that will save us all a lot of trouble, McKellar,” said Mr. Cord, and presently left his gloomy gardener. He had attained his object. When he went back into the house, Eddie had gone, and he could go back to his new driver in peace.

He was not interrupted until ten minutes past one, when Crystal came into the room, her eyes shining with exactly the same color that, beyond the lawn, the sea was displaying. Unlike Eddie, she looked better than in her fancy dress. She had on flat tennis shoes, a cotton blouse and a duck skirt, and a russet-colored sweater. Miss Cox would have rejected every item of her costume except the row of pearls, which just showed at her throat.

She kissed her father rapidly, and said:

“Good morning, dear. Are you ready for breakfast—lunch I mean?”

She was a little bit flustered for the reason that it seemed to her as if any one would be able to see that she was an entirely different Crystal from the one of the evening before, and she was not quite sure what she was going to answer when her father said, as she felt certain he must say at any moment, “My dear child, what has come over you?”

He did not say this, however. He held out his golf-club and said, "Got a new driver."

"Yes, yes, dear, very nice," said Crystal. "But I want to have lunch punctually, to-day."

Mr. Cord sighed. Crystal wasn't always very sympathetic. "I'm ready," he said, "only Eddie's coming."

"*Eddie!*" exclaimed Crystal, drawing her shoulders up, as if at the sight of a cobra in her path. "Why is Eddie coming to lunch? I did not ask him."

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"No, my dear, I took that liberty," replied her father. "It seemed the only way of getting rid of him."

"Well, I sha'n't wait for him," said Crystal, ringing the bell. "I have an engagement at a quarter past two."

"At the golf club?" asked her father, his eye lighting a little. "You might drive me out, you know."

"No, dear; quite in the other direction—with a man who was at the party last night."

"You enjoyed the party?"

"No, not a bit."

"But you stayed till morning."

"I stopped and took a swim."

"You enjoyed that, I suppose?"

His daughter glanced at him and turned crimson; but she did not have to answer, for at that moment Tomes came, in response to her ring, and she said:

"We won't wait lunch for Mr. Verriman, Tomes." Then, as he went away, she asked, "And what was Eddie doing here this morning, anyhow?"

"He was scolding me," replied Mr. Cord. "Have you noticed, Crystal, what a lot of scolding is going on in the world at present? I believe that that is why no one is getting any work done—everyone is so busy scolding everybody else. The politicians are scolding, and the newspapers are scolding, and most of the fellows I know are scolding. I believe I've got hold of a great truth—"

"And may I ask what Eddie was scolding about?" asked Crystal, no more interested in great truths than most of us.

"About you."

Crystal moved her head about as if things had now reached a point where it wasn't even worth while to be angry. "About me?"

"It seems you're a socialist, my dear. Eddie asked me how long it was since I had taken an inventory of your economic beliefs. I could not remember that I ever had, but perhaps you will tell them to me now. That is," Mr. Cord added, "if you can do it without scolding me—probably an impossible condition to impose nowadays."

"It's a pity about Eddie," said Crystal, fiercely. "If only stupid people would be content to be stupid, instead of trying to run the world—"

"Ah, my dear, it's only stupid people who are under the impression that they can. Good morning again, Eddie, we were just speaking of you."

Mr. Cord added the last sentence without the slightest change of tone or expression as his guest was ushered in by Tones, who, catching Crystal's eyes for a more important fact than Eddie's arrival, murmured that luncheon was served.

"Well, Eddie," said Crystal, and there was a sort of gay vibration in her whole figure, and her tone was like a bright banner of war, "and so you came round to complain to my father, did you?"

Mr. Cord laid his hand on her shoulder. "Do you think you could demolish Eddie just as well at table, my dear?" he said. "If so, there's no use in letting the food get cold."

"Oh, she can do it anywhere," replied Eddie, bitterly, and then, striking his habitual note of warning, he went on, "but, honestly, Crystal, if you had heard what your father and I heard this morning—"

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"I had a visit from David's brother this morning," put in Mr. Cord, "the editor of your favorite morning paper."

"Ben Moreton, here! Oh, *father*, why didn't you call me? Yes, I know," she added, as her father opened his mouth to say that she had left most particular instructions that she was to be allowed to sleep as late as she could, "I know, but you must have known I should have wanted to look David's brother over. Has he long hair? Does he wear a soft tie? Did you hate him?"

"Eddie didn't take much of a fancy to him."

"I should say not. A damned, hollow-eyed fanatic."

"Is he as good-looking as David, father? What does he look like?"

Mr. Cord hesitated. "Well, a little like my engraving of Thomas Jefferson as a young man."

"He looks as if he might have a bomb in his pocket."

"Oh, Eddie, do keep quiet, there's a dear, and let father give me one of his long, wonderful accounts. Go ahead, father."

"Well," said Mr. Cord, helping himself from a dish that Tomes was presenting to him, "as I told you, Eddie had dropped in very kindly to scold me about you, when Tomes announced Mr. Moreton. Tomes thought he ought to be put straight out of the house. Didn't you, Tomes?"

"No, sir," said Tomes, who was getting used to his employer, although he did not encourage this sort of thing, particularly before the footmen.

"Well, Moreton came in and said, very simply—"

"Has he good manners, father?"

"He has no manners at all," roared Eddie.

"Oh, how nice," said Crystal, of whom it might be asserted without flattery that she now understood in perfection the art of irritating Eddie.

"He is very direct and natural," her father continued. "He has a lot more punch than your brother-in-law, my dear. In fact, I was rather impressed with the young fellow until he and Eddie fell to quarreling. Things did not go so well, then."

“You mean,” said Crystal, the gossip rather getting the best of the reformer in her, “that he lost his temper horribly?”

“I should say he did,” said Eddie.

“Well, Eddie, you know you were not perfectly calm,” answered Cord. “Let us say that they both lost their tempers, which is strange, for as far as I could see they were agreed on many essentials. They both believe that one class in the community ought to govern the other. They both believe the world is in a very bad way; only, according to Eddie, we are going to have chaos if capital loses its control of the situation; and according to Moreton we are going to have chaos if labor doesn’t get control. So, as one or the other seems bound to happen, we ought to be able to adjust ourselves to chaos. In fact, Crystal, I have been interviewing McKellar about having a chaos cellar built in the garden.”

Eddie pushed back his plate; it was empty, but the gesture suggested that he could not go on choking down the food of a man who joked about such serious matters.

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"I must say, Mr. Cord," he began, "I really must say—" He paused, surprised to find that he really hadn't anything that he must say, and Crystal turned to her father:

"But you haven't told me why he came. To see Eugenia, I suppose?"

"No; he hadn't heard of the marriage. He came to talk to his brother."

"For you must know," put in Eddie, hastily, "that Mr. Ben Moreton does not approve of the marriage—oh, dear, no. He would consider such a connection quite beneath his family. He disapproves of Eugenia as a sister-in-law."

"How could any one disapprove of her?" asked her sister, hotly.

"Jevver hear such nerve?" said Eddie.

"It's not Eugenia; it's capital Moreton disapproves of," Mr. Cord went on, patiently explaining. "You see it never crossed our minds that the Moretons might object, but of course they do. They regard us as a very degrading connection. Doubtless it will hurt Ben Moreton with his readers to be connected with a financial pirate like myself, quite as much as it will hurt me in the eyes of most of my fellow board members when it becomes known that my son-in-law's brother is the editor of *Liberty*."

"The Moretons disapprove," repeated Crystal, to whom the idea was not at all agreeable.

"Disapprove, nonsense!" said Eddie. "I believe he came to blackmail you. To see what he could get out of you if he offered to stop the marriage. Well, why not? If these fellows believe all the money ought to be taken away from the capitalists, why should they care how it's done? I can't see much difference between robbing a man, and legislating his fortune out of—"

"Well, I must tell you, father dear," said Crystal, exactly as if Eddie had not been speaking, "that I think it was horrid of you not to have me called when you must have known—"

"Crystal, you're scolding me," wailed her father. "And most unjustly. I did ask him to lunch just for your sake, although I saw Eddie was shocked, and I was afraid Tomes would give warning. But I did ask him, only he wouldn't stay."

Crystal rose from the table with her eye on the clock, and they began to make their way back to Mr. Cord's study, as she asked:

"Why wouldn't he stay?"

"I gathered because he didn't want to. Perhaps he was afraid he'd have to argue with Eddie about capital and labor all through lunch. And of course he did not know that I had another beautiful daughter sleeping off the effects of a late party, or very likely he would have accepted."

Very likely he would.

Just as they entered the study, the telephone rang. Crystal sprang to the instrument, brushing away her father's hand, which had moved toward it.

"It's for me, dear," she said, and continued, speaking into the mouthpiece: "Yes, it's I." (A pause.) "Where are you?... Oh, yes, I know the place. I'll be there in five minutes, in a little blue car." She hung up the receiver, sprang up, and looked very much surprised to see Eddie and her father still there just as before. "Good-by, Eddie," she said, "I'm sorry, but I have an engagement. Good-by, father."

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"You don't want to run me out to the golf club first?"

"Not possible, dear. The chauffeur can take you in the big car."

"Yes, but he'll scold me all the way about there not being room enough in the garage."

Crystal was firm. "I'm sorry, but I can't, dear. This is important. I may take a job. I'll tell you all about it this evening." And she left the room, with a smile that kept getting entirely beyond her control.

"What's this? What's this?" cried Eddie as the door shut. "A job. You wouldn't let Crystal take a job, would you, Mr. Cord?"

"I haven't been consulted," said Mr. Cord, taking out his new driver again.

"But didn't you notice how excited she was. I'm sure it's decided."

"Yes, I noticed, Eddie; but it looked to me more like a man than a job. How do you think we'd come out if I gave you a stroke and a half a hole?"

Eddie was too perturbed even to answer.

In the meantime, Crystal was spinning along Bellevue Avenue, forgetting to bow to her friends, and wondering why the car was going so badly until, her eye falling on the speedometer, she noticed that she was doing a mild thirty-five miles an hour. Sooner, therefore, than the law allowed, she reached a small park that surrounds a statue of Perry, and there she picked up a passenger.

Ben got in and shut the little door almost before she brought the car to a standstill.

[Illustration: "I'll be there in five minutes, in a little blue car"]

"When you were little," he said, "did you ever imagine something wonderful that might happen—like the door's opening and a delegation coming to elect you captain of the baseball team, or whatever is a little girl's equivalent of that—and keep on imagining it and imagining it, until it seemed as if it really were going to happen? Well, I have been standing here saying to myself, Wouldn't it be wonderful if Crystal should come in a little blue car and take me to drive? And, by Heaven! you'll never believe me, but she actually did."

"Tell me everything you've done since I saw you," she answered.

"I haven't done anything but think about you. Oh yes, I have, too. I've reappraised the universe. You see, you've just made me a present of a brand-new world, and I've been

pretty busy, I can tell you, untying the string and unwrapping the paper, and bless me, Crystal, it looks like a mighty fine present so far.”

“Oh,” she said, “I think you talk charmingly.” She had started to say, “you make love charmingly,” but on second thoughts decided that the overt statement had better come from him. “Dear me,” she went on, “we have so much to talk about. There’s my job. Can’t we talk a little about that?”

They could and did. Their talk consisted largely in his telling her how much richer a service she could render his paper through having been unconsciously steeped in beauty than if she had been merely intellectually instructed—than if, as she more simply put it, she had known something. And as he talked, her mind began to expand in the warm atmosphere of his praise and to give off its perfume like a flower.

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But the idea of her working with him day after day, helping the development of the paper which had grown as dear as a child to him, was so desirable that he did not dare to contemplate it unless it promised realization.

"Oh," he broke out, "you won't really do it. Your family will object, or something. Probably when I go away to-night, I shall never see you again."

"You are still going away to-night?"

"I must."

She looked at him and slowly shook her head, as a mother shakes her head at the foolish plans of a child.

"I thought I was going," he said, weakly.

"Why?"

He groaned, but did not answer.

She thought, "Oh, dear, I wish when men want to be comforted they would not make a girl spend so much time and energy getting them to say that they do want it." Aloud she said:

"You must tell me what's the matter."

"It's a long story."

"We have all afternoon."

"That's it—we haven't all eternity."

"Oh, eternity," said Crystal, dismissing it with the Cord wave of the hand. "Who wants eternity? 'Since we must die how bright the starry track,' you know."

"No; what is that?"

"I don't remember."

"Oh."

After this meeting of minds they drove for some time in silence. Ben was seeing a new aspect of Newport—bare, rugged country, sandy roads, a sudden high rock jutting out toward the sea, a rock on which tradition asserts that Bishop Berkeley once sat and considered the illusion of matter. They stopped at length at the edge of a sandy beach. Crystal parked her car neatly with a sharp turn of the wheel, and got out.

"There's a tea basket," she called over her shoulder.

Ben's heart bounded at the news—not that he was hungry, but as the hour was now but little past half after two a tea basket indicated a prolonged interview. He found it tucked away in the back of the car, and followed her. They sat down at the edge of the foam. He lit a pipe, clasped his hands about his knees and stared out to sea; she curled her feet backward, grasped an ankle in her hand, and, looking at him, said:

"Now what makes you groan so?"

"I haven't meant to be dishonest," he said, "but I have been obtaining your friendship—trying to—under false pretenses."

"Trying to?" said Crystal. "Now isn't it silly to put that in."

He turned and smiled at her. She was really incredibly sweet. "But, all the same," he went on, "there is a barrier, a real, tangible barrier between us."

Crystal's heart suffered a chill convulsion at these words. "Good gracious!" she thought. "He's entangled with another woman—oh dear!—*marriage*"—But she did not interrupt him, and he continued:

"I let you think that I was one of the men you might have known—that I was asked to your party last night, whereas, as a matter of fact, I only watched you—"

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Crystal's mind, working with its normal rapidity, invented, faced, and passed over the fact that he must have been one of the musicians. She said aloud:

"I think I ought to tell you that I'm not much of a believer in barriers—between sensible people who want friendship."

"Friendship!" exclaimed Ben, as if that were the last thing he had come out on a lovely summer afternoon to discuss.

"There aren't any real barriers any more," Crystal continued. "Differences of position, and religion, and all those things don't seem to matter now. Romeo and Juliet wouldn't have paid any attention to the little family disagreement if they had lived to-day."

"In the case of Romeo and Juliet, if I remember correctly," said Ben, "it was not exactly a question of friendship."

She colored deeply, but he refused to modify his statement, for, after all, it was correct. "But difference of opinion *is* an obstacle," he went on. "I have seen husbands and wives parted by differences of opinion in the late war. And as far as I'm concerned there's a war on now—a different war, and I came here to try to prevent my brother marrying into an enemy influence—"

"Good Heavens!" cried Crystal. "You are Ben Moreton! Why didn't I see it sooner? I'm Crystal Cord," and, lifting up her chin, she laughed.

That she could laugh as the gulf opened between them seemed to him terrible. He turned his head away.

She stopped laughing. "You don't think it's amusing?" (He shook his head.) "That we're relations-in-law, when we thought it was all so unknown and romantic? No wonder I felt at home with you, when I've read so many of your letters to David—such nice letters, too—and I subscribe to your paper, and read every word of the editorials. And to think that you would not lunch with me to-day, when my father asked you."

"To think that it was you I was being asked to lunch with, and didn't know it!"

"Well, you dine with us to-morrow," she answered, stating a simple fact.

"Crystal," he said, and put his hand on hers as if this would help him through his long explanation; but the continuity of his thought was destroyed and his spirit wounded by her immediately withdrawing it; and then—so exactly does the spring of love resemble the uncertain glory of an April day—he was rendered perfectly happy again by perceiving that her action was due to the publicity of their position and not to repugnance to the caress.

Fortunately he was a man not without invention, and so when a few minutes later she suggested opening the tea basket, he insisted on moving to a more retired spot on the plea that the teakettle would burn better out of the wind; and Crystal, who must have known that Tomes never gave her a teakettle, but made the tea at home and put it in a thermos bottle, at once agreed to the suggestion.

They moved back across the road, where irregular rocks sheltered small plots of grass and wild flowers, and here, instead of an Arcadian duet, they had, most unsuitably, their first quarrel.

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It began as quarrels are so apt to do, by a complete agreement. Of course he would stay over the next day, which was Sunday, and not very busy in the office of *Liberty*. In return he expected her undivided attention. She at once admitted that this was part of the plan—only there would have to be one little exception; she was dining out this evening. Oh, well, that could be broken, couldn't it? She would like to break it, but it happened to be one of those engagements that had to be kept. Ben could not understand that.

At first she tried to explain it to him: She had chosen her own evening several weeks ago with these people, who wanted her to meet a friend of theirs who was motoring down specially from Boston. She felt she must keep her word.

"I assure you I don't want to, but you understand, don't you?"

If she had looked at his face she would not have asked the last question. He did not understand; indeed, he had resolved not to.

"No," he said, "I must own, I don't. If you told me that you *wanted* to go, that would be one thing. I shouldn't have a word to say then."

"Oh yes, you would, Ben," said Crystal, but he did not notice her.

"I can't understand your allowing yourself to be dragged there against your will. You say you despise this life, but you seem to take it pretty seriously if you can't break any engagement that you may make."

"How absurd you are! Of course I often break engagements."

"I see. You do when the inducement is sufficient. Well, that makes it all perfectly clear."

She felt both angry and inclined to cry. She knew that to yield to either impulse would instantly solve the problem and bring a very unreasonable young man to reason. She ran over both scenes in her imagination. Registering anger, she would rise and say that, really, Mr. Moreton, if he would not listen to her explanation there was no use in prolonging the discussion. That would be the critical moment. He would take her in his arms then and there, or else he would let her go, and they would drive in silence, and part at the little park, where of course she might say, "Aren't you silly to leave me like this?"—only her experience was that it was never very practical to make up with an angry man in public.

To burst into tears was a safer method, but she had a natural repugnance to crying, and perhaps she was subconsciously aware that she might be left, after the quarrel was apparently made up by this method, with a slight resentment against the man who had forced her to adopt so illogical a line of conduct.

A middle course appealed to her. She laid her hand on Ben's. A few minutes before it would have seemed unbelievable to Ben that his own hand would have remained cold and lifeless under that touch, but such was now the case.

"Ben," she said, "if you go on being disagreeable a second longer you must make up your mind how you will behave when I burst into tears."

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“How I should behave?”

She nodded.

His hands clasped hers. He told her how he should behave. He even offered to show her, without putting her to the trouble of tears.

“You mean,” she said, “that you would forgive me? Well, forgive me, anyhow. I’m doing what I think is right about this old dinner. Perhaps I’m wrong about it; perhaps you’re mistaken and I’m not absolutely perfect, but if I were, think what a lot of fun you would miss in changing me. And you know I never meant to abandon you for the whole evening. I’ll get away at half past nine and we’ll take a little turn.”

So that was settled.

CHAPTER III

As they drove back she revealed another plan to him—she was taking him for a moment to see a friend of hers. He protested. He did not want to see anyone but herself, but Crystal was firm. He must see this woman; she was their celebrated parlor Bolshevik. Ben hated parlor Bolsheviks. Did he know any? No. Well, then. Anyhow, Sophia would never forgive her if she did not bring him. Sophia adored celebrities. Sophia who? Sophia Dawson. The name seemed dimly familiar to Ben, and then he remembered. It was the name on the thousand-dollar check for the strike sufferers that had come in the day before.

They drove up an avenue of little oaks to a formidable palace built of gray stone, so smoothly faced that there was not a crevice in the immense pale facade. Two men in knee-breeches opened the double doors and they went in between golden grilles and rows of tall white lilies. They were led through a soundless hall, and up stairs so thickly carpeted that the feet sank in as in new-fallen snow, and finally they were ushered through a small painted door into a small painted room, which had been brought all the way from Sienna, and there they found Mrs. Dawson—a beautiful, worn, world-weary Mrs. Dawson, with one streak of gray in the front of her dark hair, her tragic eyes, and her long violet and black draperies—a perfect Sibyl.

Crystal did not treat her as a Sibyl, however. “Hullo, Sophie!” she said. “This is my brother-in-law’s brother, Ben Moreton. He’s crazy to meet you. You’ll like him. I can’t stay because I’m dining somewhere or other, but he’s not.”

“Will he dine with me?” said Mrs. Dawson in a wonderful deep, slow voice—“just stay on and dine with me alone?”

Ben began to say that he couldn't, but Crystal said yes, that he would be delighted to, and that she would stop for him again about half past nine, and that it was a wonderful plan, and then she went away.

Mrs. Dawson seemed to take it all as a matter of course. "Sit down, Mr. Moreton," she said. "I have a quarrel with you."

Ben could not help feeling a little disturbed by the way he had been injected into Mrs. Dawson's evening without her volition. He did not sit down.

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"You know," he said, "there isn't any reason why you should have me to dine just because Crystal says so. I do want to thank you for the check you sent in to us for the strike fund. It will do a lot of good."

"Oh, that," replied Mrs. Dawson. "They are fighting all our battles for us."

"It cheered us up in the office. I wanted to tell you, and now I think I'll go. I dare say you are dining out, anyhow—"

Her eyes flashed at him. "Dining out!" she exclaimed, as if the suggestion insulted her. "You evidently don't know me. I never dine out. I have nothing in common with these people. I lead a very lonely life. You do me a favor by staying. You and I could exchange ideas. There is no one in Newport whom I can talk to—reactionaries."

"Miss Cord is not exactly a reactionary," said Ben, sitting down.

Mrs. Dawson smiled. "Crystal is not a reactionary; Crystal is a child," she replied. "But what can you expect of William Cord's daughter? He is a dangerous and disintegrating force—cold—cynical—he feels not the slightest public responsibility for his possessions." Mrs. Dawson laid her hand on her heart as if it were weighted with all her jewels and footmen and palaces. "Most Bourbons are cynical about human life, but he goes farther; he is cynical about his own wealth. And that brings me to my quarrel with you, Mr. Moreton. How could you let your brother spend his beautiful vigorous youth as a parasite to Cord's vapid son? Was that consistent with your beliefs?"

This attack on his consistency from a lady whose consistency seemed even more flagrant amused Ben, but as he listened he was obliged to admit that there was a great deal of good sense in what she had to say about David, whom she had met once or twice at the Cords'. Ben was too candid and eager not to ask her before long the question that was in his mind—how it was possible for a woman holding her views to be leading a life so opposed to them.

She was not at all offended, and even less at a loss for an answer. "I am not a free agent, Mr. Moreton," she said. "Unhappily, before I began to think at all, I had undertaken certain obligations. The law allows a woman to dispose of everything but her property while she is still a child. I married at eighteen."

It was a story not without interest and Mrs. Dawson told it well. There does not live a man who would not have been interested.

They dined, not in the great dining room downstairs, nor even in the painted room from Sienna, but in a sort of loggia that opened from it, where, beyond the shaded lights, Ben could watch the moon rise out of the sea.



It was a perfect little meal, short, delicious, and quickly served by three servants. He enjoyed it thoroughly, although he found his hostess a strangely confusing companion. He would make up his mind that she was a sincere soul captured by her environment, when a freshly discovered jewel on her long fingers would shake his faith. And he would just decide that she was a melodramatic fraud, when she would surprise him by her scholarly knowledge of social problems. She had read deeply, knew several languages, and had known many of the European leaders. Such phrases as “Jaures wrote me ten days before he died—” were frequent, but not too frequent, on her lips.

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By the time Crystal stopped for him Ben had begun to feel like a child who has lost his mother in a museum, or as Dante might have felt if he had missed Virgil from his side. When he bade Mrs. Dawson good night, she asked him to come back.

"Come and spend September here," she said, as if it were a small thing. "You can work all day if you like. I sha'n't disturb you, and you need never see a soul. It will do you good."

He was touched by the invitation, but of course he refused it. He tried to explain tactfully, but clearly, why it was that he couldn't do that sort of thing—that the editor of *Liberty* did not take his holiday at Newport.

She understood, and sighed. "Ah, yes," she said. "I'm like that man in mythology whom neither the sky nor the earth would receive. I'm very lonely, Mr. Moreton."

He found himself feeling sorry for her, as he followed a footman downstairs, his feet sinking into the carpets at each step. Crystal in the blue car was at the door. She was bareheaded and the wind had been blowing her hair about.

"Well," she said, as he got in, "did you have a good time? I'm sure you had a good dinner."

"Excellent, but confusing. I don't quite get your friend."

"You don't understand Sophia?" Crystal's tone expressed surprise. "You mean her jewels and her footmen? Why, Ben, it's just like the fathers of this country who talked about all men being equal and yet were themselves slaveholders. She sincerely believes those things in a way, and then it's such a splendid role to play, and she enjoys that; and then it teases Freddie Dawson. Freddie is rather sweet if he's thoroughly unhappy, and this keeps him unhappy almost all the time. Did she ask you to stay? I meant her to."

"Yes, she did; but of course I couldn't."

"Oh, Ben, why not?"

This brought them once more to the discussion of the barrier. This time Ben felt he could make her see. He said that she must look at it this way—that in a war you could not go and stay in enemy country, however friendly your personal relations might be. Well, as far as he was concerned this was a war, a class war.

They were headed for the Ocean Drive, and Crystal rounded a sharp turn before she answered seriously:

"But I thought you didn't believe in war."

"I don't," he answered. "I hate it—I hate all violence. We—labor, I mean—didn't initiate this, but when men won't see, when they have power and won't stop abusing it, there is only one way to make—"

"Why, Ben," said Crystal, "you're just a pacifist in other people's quarrels, but as militaristic as can be in your own. I'm not a pacifist, but I'm a better one than you, because I don't believe in emphasizing any difference between human beings. That's why I want a League of Nations. I hate gangs—all women really do. Little girls don't form gangs like little boys. Every settlement worker knows that. I won't have you say that I belong to the other group. I won't be classified. I'm a human being—and I intend to behave as such."

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Since she had left him she had been immersed again in her old life—her old friends—and the result had been to make her wonder if her experience with Ben had been as wonderful as it had seemed. When she stopped for him she had been almost prepared to find that the wild joy of their meetings had been something accidental and temporary, and that only a stimulating and pleasant friendship was left. But as soon as she saw that he really regarded their differences seriously, all her own prudence and doubt melted away. She knew she was ready to make any sacrifices for him, and in view of that all talk of obstacles was folly.

She stopped the car on the point of the island, with the open sea on one hand, the harbor on the other. In front of them the lightship was moving with a slow, majestic roll, and to the right was the long festoon of Narragansett lights, and as they stopped the lighted bulk of the New York boat appeared, making its way toward Point Judith.

His prolonged silence began to frighten her.

“Ben,” she said, “do you seriously mean that you believe friendship between us is impossible?”

“Friendship, nothing,” answered Moreton. “I love you.”

He said it as if it had always been understood between them, as of course it had, but the instant he said it, he gave her a quick, appealing look to see how she would take so startling an assertion.

If Crystal had poured out just what was in her mind at that second she would have answered: “Of course you do. I’ve known that longer than you have. And can’t you see that if I had had any doubt about its being true, I’d have taken steps to make it true? But, as I really did not doubt it, I’ve been able to be quite passive and leave it mostly to you, which I so much prefer.”

But rigorous candor is rarely attained, and Crystal did not say this. In fact, for a few seconds she did not say anything, but merely allowed her eyes to shine upon him, with the inevitable result that at the end of precisely six seconds of their benevolent invitation he took her in his arms and kissed her. It was a very unprotected point, and several cars were standing not too far away, but Crystal, who had an excellent sense of proportion, made no objection whatever. She was being proved right in two important particulars—first, that she was a human being, and second, that there was no barrier between them. She was very generous about it. She did not say, “Where’s your barrier now?” or anything like that; she simply said nothing, and the barrier passed out of the conversation and was no more seen.

Very soon, alleging that she must get home at the time at which she usually did get home from dinners, she took him back; but she soothed him with the promise of an uninterrupted day to follow.

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Time—the mere knowledge of unbroken hours ahead—is a boon which real love cannot do without. Minor feelings may flourish on snatched interviews and stolen meetings, but love demands—and usually gets—protected leisure. The next day these lovers had it. They spent the morning, when Mr. Cord was known to be playing golf, at the Cords' house, and then when Mr. Cord telephoned that he was staying to luncheon at the club, if Crystal did not object (and Crystal did not), she and Ben arranged a picnic—at least Tomes did, and they went off about one o'clock in the blue car. They went to a pool in the rocks that Crystal had always known about, with high walls around it, and here, with a curtain of foam between them and the sea, for the waves were rising, they ate lunch, as much alone as on a desert island.

It was here that Ben asked her to marry him, or, to be accurate, it was here that they first began talking about their life together, and whether Nora would become reconciled to another woman about the flat.

The nearest approach to a definite proposal was Ben's saying:

"You would not mind my saying something about all this to your father before I go this evening, would you?"

And Crystal replied: "Poor father! It will be a blow, I'm afraid."

"Well," said Ben, "he told me himself that he liked me better than David."

"That's not saying much."

At this Ben laughed lightly.

He might have had his wrong-headed notions about barriers, but he was not so un-American as to regard a father as an obstacle.

"But, oh, Crystal," he added, "suppose you find you do hate being poor. It is a bore in some ways."

Crystal, who had been tucking away the complicated dishes of her luncheon basket, looked at Ben and lightly sucked one finger to which some raspberry jam from Tomes's supernal sandwiches had adhered.

"I sha'n't mind it a bit, Ben," she said, "and for a good reason—because I'm terribly conceited." He did not understand at all, and she went on: "I believe I shall be just as much of a person—perhaps more—without money. The women who really mind being poor are the humble-minded ones, who think that they are made by their clothes and their lovely houses and their maids and their sables. When they lose them they lose all their personality, and of course that terrifies them. I don't think I shall lose mine. Does it shock you to know that I think such a lot of myself?"

It appeared it did not shock him at all.

[Illustration: "Suppose you find you do hate being poor?"]

When they reached the house she established him in the drawing-room and went off to find her father.

She was a true woman, by which is meant now and always that she preferred to allow a man to digest his dinner before she tried to bring him to a rational opinion. But in this case her hands were tied. The Cords dined at eight—or sometimes a little later, and Ben's boat left for New York at half past nine, so that it would be utterly impossible to postpone the discussion of her future until after dinner. It had to be done at once.

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Crystal ran up and knocked at his bedroom door. Loud splashings from the adjoining bathroom were all the answer she got. She sat down on the stairs and waited. Those are the moments that try men's and even women's souls. For the first time her enterprise seemed to her a little reckless. For an instant she had the surprising experience of recognizing the fact that Ben was a total stranger. She looked at the gray-stone stairway on which she was sitting and thought that her life had been as safe and sheltered as a cloister, and now, steered by this total stranger, she proposed to launch herself on an uncharted course of change. And to this program she was to bring her father's consent—for she knew very well that if she couldn't, Ben wouldn't be able to—in the comparatively short time between now and dinner. Then, the splashing having ceased, the sound of bureau drawers succeeded, and Crystal sprang up and knocked again.

"That you, Peters?" said an unencouraging voice. (Peters was Mr. Cord's valet.)

"No, dear, it's I," said Crystal.

"Oh, come in," said Mr. Cord. He was standing in the middle of the room in his shirt sleeves and gloomily contemplating the shirt he wore. "What's this laundress, anyhow? A Bolshevik or a pastry-cook?" he said. "Did you ever see anything like this shirt?"

Crystal approached and studied the shirt. It appeared to her to be perfectly done up, but she said: "Yes, dear, how terrible! I'll pack her off to-morrow, but you always look all right whatever you wear; that's some comfort." She saw that even this hadn't done much good, and, going to the heart of the problem, she asked, "How did your golf go?"

Mr. Cord's gloom gathered as he answered, with resignation, "Oh, all right."

His manner was exactly similar to Ben's in his recent moment of depression, and not unlike McKellar's when he had explained what he suffered under the good Lord's weather.

"Is Eddie's game any better?" asked Crystal, feeling her way.

"No," cried her father, contemptuously. "He's rotten, but I'm worse. And golf-clubs, Crystal! No one can make a club any more. Have you noticed that? But the truth of the matter is, I'm getting too old to play golf." And Mr. Cord sat down with a good but unconscious imitation of a broken old man.

Of course Crystal swept this away. She scolded him a little, pointed out his recent prowess, and spoke slightly of all younger athletes, but she really had not time to do the job thoroughly, for the thought of Ben, sitting so anxious in the drawing-room alone, hurried her on.

“Anyhow, dear,” she said, “I’ve come to talk to you about something terribly important. What would you say, father, if I told you I was engaged?”

Mr. Cord was so startled that he said, what was rare for him, the first thing that came into his head:

“Not to Eddie?”

The true diplomatist, we have been told, simply takes advantage of chance, and Crystal was diplomatic. “And suppose it is?” she replied.

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"I should refuse my consent," replied her father.

Crystal looked hurt. "Is there anything against Eddie," she asked, "except his golf?"

"Yes," answered her father, "there are two of the most serious things in the world against him—first, that he doesn't amount to anything; and second, that you don't love him."

"No," Crystal admitted, "I don't, but then—love—father, isn't love rather a serious undertaking nowadays? Is it a particularly helpful adjunct to marriage? Look at poor Eugenia. Isn't it really more sensible to marry a nice man who can support one, and then if in time one does fall in love with another man—"

"Never let me hear you talk like that again, Crystal," said her father, with a severity and vigor he seldom showed outside of board meetings. "It's only your ignorance of life that saves you from being actually revolting. I'm an old man and not sentimental, you'll grant, but, take my word for it, love is the only hope of pulling off marriage successfully, and even then it's not easy. As for Eugenia, I think she's made a fool of herself and is going to be unhappy, but I'd rather do what she has done than what you're contemplating. At least she cared for that fellow—"

"I'm glad you feel like that, darling," said Crystal, "because it isn't Eddie I'm engaged to, but Ben Moreton. He's waiting downstairs now."

Mr. Cord started up—his eyes shining like black flames.

"By God! Crystal," he said, "you sha'n't marry that fellow—Eugenia—perhaps—but not you."

"But, father, you said yourself, you thought he was a fine—"

"I don't care what I said," replied Mr. Cord, and, striding to the door, he flung it open and called in a voice that rolled about the stone hall: "Mr. Moreton, Mr. Moreton! Come up here, will you?"

Ben came bounding up the stairs like a panther. Cord beckoned him in with a sharp gesture and shut the door.

"This won't do at all, Moreton," he said. "You can't have Crystal."

Ben did not answer; he looked very steadily at Cord, who went on:

"You think I can't stop it—that she's of age and that you wouldn't take a penny of my money, anyhow. That's the idea, isn't it?"

"That's it," said Ben.

Cord turned sharply to Crystal. “Does what I think make any difference to you?” he asked.

“A lot, dear,” she answered, “but I don’t understand. You never seemed so much opposed to the radical doctrine.”

“No, it’s the radical, not the doctrine, your father objects to,” said Ben.

“Exactly,” answered Mr. Cord. “You’ve put it in a nutshell. Crystal, I’m going to tell you what these radicals really are—they’re failures—everyone of them. Sincere enough—they want the world changed because they haven’t been able to get along in it as it is—they want a new deal because they don’t know how to play their cards; and when

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they get a new hand, they'll play it just as badly. It's not their theories I object to, but them themselves. You think if you married Moreton you'd be going into a great new world of idealism. You wouldn't. You'd be going into a world of failure—of the pettiest, most futile quarrels in the world. The chief characteristic of the man who fails is that he always believes it's the other fellow's fault; and they hate the man who differs with them by one per cent more than they hate the man who differs by one hundred. Has there ever been a revolution where they did not persecute their fellow revolutionists worse than they persecuted the old order, or where the new rule wasn't more tyrannical than the old?"

"No one would dispute that," said Ben. "It is the only way to win through to—"

"Ah," said Cord, "I know what you're going to say, but I tell you, you win through to liberal practices when, and only when, the conservatives become converted to your ideas, and put them through for you. That's why I say I have no quarrel with radical doctrines—they are coming, always coming, but"—Cord paused to give his words full weight—"I hate the radical."

There was a little pause. Crystal, who had sunk into a low chair, raised her eyes to Ben, as if she expected a passionate contradiction from him, but it did not come.

"Yes," he said, after a moment, "that's all true, Mr. Cord—with limitations; but, granting it, you've put my side, too. What are we to say of the conservative—the man who has no vision of his own—who has to go about stealing his beliefs from the other side? He's very efficient at putting *them* into effect—but efficient as a tool, as a servant. Look at the mess he makes of his own game when he tries to act on his own ideas. He crushes democracy with an iron efficiency, and he creates communism. He closes the door to trade-unionism and makes a revolution. That's efficiency for you. We radicals are not so damned inefficient, while we let the conservatives do our work for us."

"Well, let it be revolution, then," said Cord. "I believe you're right. It's coming, but do you want to drag a girl like Crystal into it? Think of her! Say you take her, as I suppose a young fellow like you can do. She'd have perhaps ten years of an exciting division of allegiance between your ideas and the way she had been brought up, and the rest of her life (for, believe me, as we get older we all return to our early traditions)—the rest of her life she'd spend regretting the ties and environment of her youth. On the other hand, if she gives you up she will have regrets, too, I know, but they won't wreck her and embitter her the way the others will."

Ben's face darkened. No man not a colossal egotist could hear such a prophecy with indifference. He did not at once answer, and then he turned to Crystal.

“What do you think of that?” he asked.

To the surprise of both men, Crystal replied with a laugh. “I was wondering,” she said, “when either of you would get round to asking what I thought of it all.”

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"Well, what do you think?" said Cord, almost harshly.

Crystal rose, and, slipping her arm through his, leaned her head on the point of her father's shoulder—he was of a good height. "I think," she said, "you both talk beautifully. I was so proud of you both—saying such profound things so easily, and keeping your tempers so perfectly" (both brows smoothed out), "and it was all the more wonderful because, it seemed to me, you were both talking about things you knew nothing about."

"What do you mean?" burst from both men with simultaneous astonishment.

"Ben, dear, father doesn't know any radicals—except you, and he's only seen you twice. Father dear, I don't believe Ben ever talked five minutes with an able, successful conservative until he came here to-day."

"You're going to throw me over, Crystal?" said Ben, seeing her pose more clearly than he heard her words.

"No," said Mr. Cord, bitterly, "she's going to throw over an old man in favor of a young one."

"You silly creatures," said Crystal, with a smile that made the words affectionate and not rude. "How can I ever throw either of you over? I'm going to be Ben's wife, and I am my father's daughter. I'm going to be those two things for all my life."

Ben took her hand. She puzzled him, but he adored her. "But some day, Crystal," he said, "you will be obliged to choose between our views—mine or your father's. You must see that."

"He's right," her father chimed in. "This is not a temporary difference of opinion, you know, Crystal. This cleavage is as old as mankind—the radical against the conservative. Time doesn't reconcile them."

Again the idea came to her: "They do love to form gangs, the poor dears." Aloud she said: "Yes, but the two types are rarely pure ones. Why, father, you think Ben is a radical, but he's the most hidebound conservative about some things—much worse than you—about free verse, for instance. I read a long editorial about it not a month ago. He really thinks anyone who defends it ought to be deported to some poetic limbo. Ben, you think my father is conservative. But there's a great scandal in his mental life. He's a Baconian—"

"He thinks Bacon wrote the plays!" exclaimed Ben, really shocked.

"Certainly I do," answered Mr. Cord. "Every man who uses his mind must think so. There is nothing in favor of the Shakespeare theory, except tradition—"

He would have talked for several hours upon the subject, but Crystal interrupted him by turning to Ben and continuing what she had meant to say:

“When you said I should have to choose between your ideas, you meant between your political ideas. Perhaps I shall, but I won’t make my choice, rest assured, until I have some reason for believing that each of you knows something—honestly knows something about the other one’s point of view.”

“I don’t get it, exactly,” said Ben.

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She addressed Mr. Cord.

"Father," she went on, "Ben has a little flat in Charles Street, and an old servant, and that's where I'm going to live."

Her father, though bitterly wounded, had regained his sardonic calm. "Perhaps," he said, "you'll bring him up to Seventy-ninth Street for Sunday dinner now and then."

Crystal shook her head. "No, dear," she said. "That isn't the way it's going to be. As soon as I get settled and have time to look about me, I shall take another little flat for you. You will live with us, for a few months in the winter, and get to know Ben's friends—his gang, as you would say—get to know them not as a philanthropist, or an employer, or an observer, but just as one of our friends—see if they really are the way you think they are. And then, in March you shall go off to Palm Beach or Virginia just as usual."

"That's a fine idea," said Mr. Cord, sarcastically. "Do you realize that I shall hardly survive your marriage with the editor of *Liberty*. I shall be kicked off—requested to resign from half a dozen boards for having such a son-in-law—"

"There's freedom for you," said Ben.

"And," continued Mr. Cord, "if it were known that I consented to the marriage, and actually consorted with such fellows! You must realize, Crystal, that most of the most influential men in the country think the way Eddie does. Half my boards are composed of older Eddies."

"You'll do better to resign from them, then," said Crystal.

Ben had been very much struck by Crystal's suggestion.

"Really, Mr. Cord," he said, "I believe that is a great idea of Crystal's. I really believe if capital had more idea of the real views of labor—as you said, you eventually adopt all our ideas, why wouldn't an intimate knowledge of individuals hurry that process?"

"Simply because I should lose all influence with my own people by merely investigating you in a friendly spirit."

"Glory!" exclaimed Ben, with open contempt for such people. "Think of penalizing the first honest attempt to understand!"

"You see the point of my plan, don't you, Ben?" said Crystal.

"You bet I do."

“That’s wonderful,” she answered, “for you’ve only heard half of it. In July, August, and September, we will come here to Newport, and you will get to understand father’s—”

“Hold on,” cried Ben, “just a moment. That is absolutely impossible, Crystal. You don’t understand. The paper couldn’t keep me a day if I did that.”

“Ha!” cried Mr. Cord, coming suddenly to life. “There’s freedom for you!”

“That would be very cruel of the owners, Ben, but if they did—”

“It wouldn’t be cruel at all,” said Moreton. “They wouldn’t have any choice. I should have lost all influence with my readers, if it were known—”

“Glory!” said Mr. Cord. “Think of penalizing the first honest attempt to understand the capitalistic class!”

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Ben stood silent, caught in the grip of an intellectual dilemma which he felt every instant would dissolve itself and which didn't.

Crystal for the first time moved away from her father. "Those are my terms," she said. "I stay with the man who agrees to them, and if you both decline them—well, I'll go off and try and open the oyster by myself."

There was a long momentous pause, and then Tomes's discreet knock on the door.

"Mr. Verriman on the telephone, madam."

"I can't come," said Crystal. "Ask him to send a message."

"Don't you see, Crystal, what your plan would do?" said her father. "Either it would make Moreton a red revolutionist and me a persecuting Bourbon, or else it would just ruin us both for either of our objectives."

"It won't ruin you for my objectives," said Crystal, "and women are more human, you know, than men."

Another knock at the door. Tomes's voice again:

"Mr. Verriman wishes to know if he might dine here this evening?"

"No," said Cord, looking at Crystal.

Crystal raised her voice. "Certainly, Tomes. Say we shall be delighted to have him—at eight."

Both men turned to her.

"Why did you do that, Crystal? Verriman—here—to-night?"

Crystal did not answer—the identity of their tones, their words, and their irritation with her should have told them the answer, but didn't.

She knew that only opposition to Eddie and Eddie's many prototypes could weld her two men solidly together.

THE END