

Modern Chronicle, a — Volume 05 eBook

Modern Chronicle, a — Volume 05 by Winston Churchill

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Contents

Modern Chronicle, a — Volume 05 eBook.....	1
Contents.....	2
Table of Contents.....	4
Page 1.....	5
Page 2.....	7
Page 3.....	9
Page 4.....	11
Page 5.....	13
Page 6.....	15
Page 7.....	16
Page 8.....	18
Page 9.....	19
Page 10.....	21
Page 11.....	23
Page 12.....	25
Page 13.....	27
Page 14.....	29
Page 15.....	31
Page 16.....	33
Page 17.....	34
Page 18.....	36
Page 19.....	38
Page 20.....	39
Page 21.....	41
Page 22.....	43



Page 23..... 45
Page 24..... 47
Page 25..... 49
Page 26..... 51
Page 27..... 53
Page 28..... 55
Page 29..... 57
Page 30..... 59
Page 31..... 61
Page 32..... 63
Page 33..... 65
Page 34..... 67
Page 35..... 69
Page 36..... 71
Page 37..... 73
Page 38..... 75
Page 39..... 77

Table of Contents

Section	Table of Contents	Page
Start of eBook		1
ASCENDI		1
CHAPTER II		7
CHAPTER III		18
CHAPTER IV		25
CHAPTER V		35



Page 1

ASCENDI

Honora did not go back to Quicksands. Neither, in this modern chronicle, shall we.

The sphere we have left, which we know is sordid, sometimes shines in the retrospect. And there came a time, after the excitement of furnishing the new house was over, when our heroine, as it were, swung for a time in space: not for a very long time; that month, perhaps, between autumn and winter.

We need not be worried about her, though we may pause for a moment or two to sympathize with her in her loneliness—or rather in the moods it produced. She even felt, in those days, slightly akin to the Lady of the Victoria (perfectly respectable), whom all of us fortunate enough occasionally to go to New York have seen driving on Fifth Avenue with an expression of wistful haughtiness, and who changes her costumes four times a day.

Sympathy! We have seen Honora surrounded by friends—what has become of them? Her husband is president of a trust company, and she has one of the most desirable houses in New York. What more could be wished for? To jump at conclusions in this way is by no means to understand a heroine with an Ideal. She had these things, and—strange as it may seem—suffered.

Her sunny drawing-room, with its gathered silk curtains, was especially beautiful; whatever the Leffingwells or Allison's may have lacked, it was not taste. Honora sat in it and wondered: wondered, as she looked back over the road she had threaded somewhat blindly towards the Ideal, whether she might not somewhere have taken the wrong turn. The farther she travelled, the more she seemed to penetrate into a land of unrealities. The exquisite objects by which she was surrounded, and which she had collected with such care, had no substance: she would not have been greatly surprised, at any moment, to see them vanish like a scene in a theatre, leaving an empty, windy stage behind them. They did not belong to her, nor she to them.

Past generations of another blood, no doubt, had been justified in looking upon the hazy landscapes in the great tapestries as their own: and children's children had knelt, in times gone by, beside the carved stone mantel. The big, gilded chairs with the silken seats might appropriately have graced the table of the Hotel de Rambouillet. Would not the warriors and the wits, the patient ladies of high degree and of many children, and even the 'precieuses ridicules' themselves, turn over in their graves if they could so much as imagine the contents of the single street in modern New York where Honora lived?

One morning, as she sat in that room, possessed by these whimsical though painful fancies, she picked up a newspaper and glanced through it, absently, until her eye fell



by chance upon a name on the editorial page. Something like an electric shock ran through her, and the letters of the name seemed to quiver and become red. Slowly they spelled—Peter Erwin.



Page 2

“The argument of Mr. Peter Erwin, of St. Louis, before the Supreme Court of the United States in the now celebrated Snowden case is universally acknowledged by lawyers to have been masterly, and reminiscent of the great names of the profession in the past. Mr. Erwin is not dramatic. He appears to carry all before him by the sheer force of intellect, and by a kind of Lincolnian ability to expose a fallacy: He is still a young man, self-made, and studied law under Judge Brice of St. Louis, once President of the National Bar Association, whose partner he is”....

Honora cut out the editorial and thrust it in her gown, and threw the newspaper in the fire. She stood for a time after it had burned, watching the twisted remnants fade from flame colour to rose, and finally blacken. Then she went slowly up the stairs and put on her hat and coat and veil. Although a cloudless day, it was windy in the park, and cold, the ruffled waters an intense blue. She walked fast.

She lunched with Mrs. Holt, who had but just come to town; and the light, like a speeding guest, was departing from the city when she reached her own door.

“There is a gentleman in the drawing-room, madam,” said the butler. “He said he was an old friend, and a stranger in New York, and asked if he might wait.”

She stood still with presentiment.

“What is his name?” she asked.

“Mr. Erwin,” said the man.

Still she hesitated. In the strange state in which she found herself that day, the supernatural itself had seemed credible. And yet—she was not prepared.

“I beg pardon, madam,” the butler was saying, “perhaps I shouldn’t—?”

“Yes, yes, you should,” she interrupted him, and pushed past him up the stairs. At the drawing-room door she paused—he was unaware of her presence. And he had not changed! She wondered why she had expected him to change. Even the glow of his newly acquired fame was not discernible behind his well-remembered head. He seemed no older—and no younger. And he was standing with his hands behind his back gazing in simple, silent appreciation at the big tapestry nearest the windows.

“Peter,” she said, in a low voice.

He turned quickly, and then she saw the glow. But it was the old glow, not the new—the light in which her early years had been spent.

“What a coincidence!” she exclaimed, as he took her hand.



“Coincidence?”

“It was only this morning that I was reading in the newspaper all sorts of nice things about you. It made me feel like going out and telling everybody you were an old friend of mine.” Still holding his fingers, she pushed him away from her at arm’s length, and looked at him. “What does it feel like to be famous, and have editorials about one’s self in the New York newspapers?”

He laughed, and released his hands somewhat abruptly.

“It seems as strange to me, Honora, as it does to you.”



Page 3

“How unkind of you, Peter!” she exclaimed.

She felt his eyes upon her, and their searching, yet kindly and humorous rays seemed to illuminate chambers within her which she would have kept in darkness: which she herself did not wish to examine.

“I’m so glad to see you,” she said a little breathlessly, flinging her muff and boa on a chair. “Sit there, where I can look at you, and tell me why you didn’t let me know you were coming to New York.”

He glanced a little comically at the gilt and silk arm-chair which she designated, and then at her; and she smiled and coloured, divining the humour in his unspoken phrase.

“For a great man,” she declared, “you are absurd.”

He sat down. In spite of his black clothes and the lounging attitude he habitually assumed, with his knees crossed—he did not appear incongruous in a seat that would have harmonized with the flowing robes of the renowned French Cardinal himself. Honora wondered why. He impressed her to-day as force—tremendous force in repose, and yet he was the same Peter. Why was it? Had the clipping that even then lay in her bosom effected this magic change? He had intimated as much, but she denied it fiercely.

She rang for tea.

“You haven’t told me why you came to New York,” she said.

“I was telegraphed for, from Washington, by a Mr. Wing,” he explained.

“A Mr. Wing,” she repeated. “You don’t mean by any chance James Wing?”

“The Mr. Wing,” said Peter.

“The reason I asked,” explained Honora, flushing, was because Howard is —associated with him. Mr. Wing is largely interested in the Orange Trust Company.”

“Yes, I know,” said Peter. His elbows were resting on the arms of his chair, and he looked at the tips of his fingers, which met. Honora thought it strange that he did not congratulate her, but he appeared to be reflecting.

“What did Mr. Wing want?” she inquired in her momentary confusion, and added hastily, “I beg your pardon, Peter. I suppose I ought not to ask that.”

“He was kind enough to wish me to live in New York he answered, still staring at the tips of his fingers.



“Oh, how nice!” she cried—and wondered at the same time whether, on second thoughts, she would think it so. “I suppose he wants you to be the counsel for one of his trusts. When—when do you come?”

“I’m not coming.”

“Not coming! Why? Isn’t it a great compliment?”

He ignored the latter part of her remark; and it seemed to her, when she recalled the conversation afterwards, that she had heard a certain note of sadness under the lightness of his reply.

“To attempt to explain to a New Yorker why any one might prefer to live in any other place would be a difficult task.”

“You are incomprehensible, Peter,” she declared. And yet she felt a relief that surprised her, and a desire to get away from the subject. “Dear old St. Louis! Somehow, in spite of your greatness, it seems to fit you.”



Page 4

"It's growing," said Peter—and they laughed together.

"Why didn't you come to lunch?" she said.

"Lunch! I didn't know that any one ever went to lunch in New York—in this part of it, at least—with less than three weeks' notice. And by the way, if I am interfering with any engagement—"

"My book is not so full as all that. Of course you'll come and stay with us, Peter."

He shook his head regretfully.

"My train leaves at six, from Forty-Second Street," he replied.

"Oh, you are niggardly," she cried. "To think how little I see of you, Peter. And sometimes I long for you. It's strange, but I still miss you terribly—after five years. It seems longer than that," she added, as she poured the boiling water into the tea-pot. But she did not look at him.

He got up and walked as far as a water-colour on the wall.

"You have some beautiful things here, Honora," he said. "I am glad I have had a glimpse of you surrounded by them to carry back to your aunt and uncle."

She glanced about the room as he spoke, and then at him. He seemed the only reality in it, but she did not say so.

"You'll see them soon," was what she said. And considered the miracle of him staying there where Providence had placed him, and bringing the world to him. Whereas she, who had gone forth to seek it—"The day after to-morrow will be Sunday," he reminded her.

Nothing had changed there. She closed her eyes and saw the little dining room in all the dignity of Sunday dinner, the big silver soup tureen catching the sun, the flowered china with the gilt edges, and even a glimpse of lace paper when the closet door opened; Aunt Mary and Uncle Tom, with Peter between them. And these, strangely, were the only tangible things and immutable.

"You'll give them—a good account of me?" she said. "I know that you do not care for New York," she added with a smile. "But it is possible to be happy here."

"I am glad you are happy, Honora, and that you have got what you wanted in life. Although I may be unreasonable and provincial and—and Western," he confessed with a twinkle—for he had the characteristic national trait of shading off his most serious



remarks—"I have never gone so far as to declare that happiness was a question of locality."

She laughed.

"Nor fame." Her mind returned to the loadstar.

"Oh, fame!" he exclaimed, with a touch of impatience, and he used the word that had possessed her all day. "There is no reality in that. Men are not loved for it."

She set down her cup quickly. He was looking at the water-colour.

"Have you been to the Metropolitan Museum lately?" he asked.

"The Metropolitan Museum?" she repeated in bewilderment.

"That would be one of the temptations of New York for me," he said. "I was there for half an hour this afternoon before I presented myself at your door as a suspicious character. There is a picture there, by Coffin, called 'The Rain,' I believe. I am very fond of it. And looking at it on such a winter's day as this brings back the summer. The squall coming, and the sound of it in the trees, and the very smell of the wet meadow-grass in the wind. Do you know it?"



Page 5

“No,” replied Honora, and she was suddenly filled with shame at the thought that she had never been in the Museum. “I didn’t know you were so fond of pictures.”

“I am beginning to be a rival of Mr. Dwyer,” he declared. “I’ve bought four—although I haven’t built my gallery. When you come to St. Louis I’ll show them to you—and let us hope it will be soon.”

For some time after she had heard the street door close behind him Honora remained where she was, staring into the fire, and then she crossed the room to a reading lamp, and turned it up.

Some one spoke in the doorway.

“Mr. Grainger, madam.”

Before she could rouse herself and recover from her astonishment, the gentleman himself appeared, blinking as though the vision of her were too bright to be steadily gazed at. If the city had been searched, it is doubtful whether a more striking contrast to the man who had just left could have been found than Cecil Grainger in the braided, grey cutaway that clung to the semblance of a waist he still possessed. In him Hyde Park and Fifth Avenue, so to speak, shook hands across the sea: put him in either, and he would have appeared indigenous.

“Hope you’ll forgive my comin’ ’round on such slight acquaintance, Mrs. Spence,” said he. “Couldn’t resist the opportunity to pay my respects. Shorter told me where you were.”

“That was very good of Mr. Shorter,” said Honora, whose surprise had given place to a very natural resentment, since she had not the honour of knowing Mrs. Grainger.

“Oh,” said Mr. Grainger, “Shorter’s a good sort. Said he’d been here himself to see how you were fixed, and hadn’t found you in. Uncommonly well fixed, I should say,” he added, glancing around the room with undisguised approval. “Why the deuce did she furnish it, since she’s gone to Paris to live with Rindge?”

“I suppose you mean Mrs. Rindge,” said Honora. “She didn’t furnish it.”

Mr. Grainger winked at her rapidly, like a man suddenly brought face to face with a mystery.

“Oh!” he replied, as though he had solved it. The solution came a few moments later. “It’s ripping!” he said. “Farwell couldn’t have done it any better.”

Honora laughed, and momentarily forgot her resentment.



“Will you have tea?” she asked. “Oh, don’t sit down there!”

“Why not?” he asked, jumping. It was the chair that had held Peter, and Mr. Grainger examined the seat as though he suspected a bent pin.

“Because,” said Honora, “because it isn’t comfortable. Pull up that other one.”



Page 6

Again mystified, he did as he was told. She remembered his reputation for going to sleep, and wondered whether she had been wise in her second choice. But it soon became apparent that Mr. Grainger, as he gazed at her from among the cushions, had no intention of dozing. His eyelids reminded her of the shutters of a camera, and she had the feeling of sitting for thousands of instantaneous photographs for his benefit. She was by turns annoyed, amused, and distraught: Peter was leaving his hotel; now he was taking the train. Was he thinking of her? He had said he was glad she was happy! She caught herself up with a start after one of these silences to realize that Mr. Grainger was making unwonted and indeed pathetic exertions to entertain her, and it needed no feminine eye to perceive that he was thoroughly uncomfortable. She had, unconsciously and in thinking of Peter, rather overdone the note of rebuke of his visit. And Honora was, above all else, an artist. His air was distinctly apologetic as he rose, perhaps a little mortified, like that of a man who has got into the wrong house.

"I very much fear I've intruded, Mrs. Spence," he stammered, and he was winking now with bewildering rapidity. "We—we had such a pleasant drive together that day to Westchester—I was tempted—"

"We did have a good time," she agreed. "And it has been a pleasure to see you again."

Thus, in the kindness of her heart, she assisted him to cover his retreat, for it was a strange and somewhat awful experience to see Mr. Cecil Grainger discountenanced. He glanced again, as he went out, at the chair in which he had been forbidden to sit.

She went to the piano, played over a few bars of Thais, and dropped her hands listlessly. Cross currents of the strange events of the day flowed through her mind: Peter's arrival and its odd heralding, and the discomfort of Mr. Grainger.

Howard came in. He did not see her under the shaded lamp, and she sat watching him with a curious feeling of detachment as he unfolded his newspaper and sank, with a sigh of content, into the cushioned chair which Mr. Grainger had vacated. Was it fancy that her husband's physical attributes had changed since he had attained his new position of dignity? She could have sworn that he had visibly swollen on the evening when he had announced to her his promotion, and he seemed to have remained swollen. Not bloated, of course: he was fatter, and—if possible pinker. But there was a growing suggestion in him of humming-and-hawing greatness. If there—were leisure in this too-leisurely chronicle for what might be called aftermath, the dinner that Honora had given to some of her Quicksands friends might be described. Suffice it to recall, with Honora, that Lily Dallam, with a sure instinct, had put the finger of her wit on this new attribute of Howard's.

"You'll kill me, Howard!" she had cried. "He even looks at the soup as though he were examining a security!"



Page 7

Needless to say, it did not cure him, although it sealed Lily Dallam's fate—and incidentally that of Quicksands. Honora's thoughts as she sat now at the piano watching him, flew back unexpectedly to the summer at Silverdale when she had met him, and she tried to imagine, the genial and boyish representative of finance that he was then. In the midst of this effort he looked up and discovered her.

"What are you doing over there, Honora?" he asked.

"Thinking," she answered.

"That's a great way to treat a man when he comes home after a day's work."

"I beg your pardon, Howard," she said with unusual meekness. "Who do you think was here this afternoon?"

"Erwin? I've just come from Mr. Wing's house—he has gout to-day and didn't go down town. He offered Erwin a hundred thousand a year to come to New York as corporation counsel. And if you'll believe me—he refused it."

"I'll believe you," she said.

"Did he say anything about it to you?"

"He simply mentioned that Mr. Wing asked him to come to New York. He didn't say why."

"Well," Howard remarked, "he's one too many for me. He can't be making over thirty thousand where he is."

CHAPTER II

THE PATH OF PHILANTHROPY

Mrs. Cecil Grainger may safely have been called a Personality, and one of the proofs of this was that she haunted people who had never seen her. Honora might have looked at her, it is true, on the memorable night of the dinner with Mrs. Holt and Trixton Brent; but—for sufficiently obvious reasons—refrained. It would be an exaggeration to say that Mrs. Grainger became an obsession with our heroine; yet it cannot be denied that, since Honora's arrival at Quicksands, this lady had, in increasing degrees, been the subject of her speculations. The threads of Mrs. Grainger's influence were so ramified, indeed, as to be found in Mrs. Dallam, who declared she was the rudest woman in New York and yet had copied her brougham; in Mr. Cuthbert and Trixton Brent; in Mrs. Kame; in Mrs. Holt, who proclaimed her a tower of strength in charities; and lastly in Mr.

Grainger himself, who, although he did not spend much time in his wife's company, had for her an admiration that amounted to awe.

Elizabeth Grainger, who was at once modern and tenaciously conservative, might have been likened to some of the Roman matrons of the aristocracy in the last years of the Republic. Her family, the Pendletons, had traditions: so, for that matter, had the Graingers. But Senator Pendleton, antique homo virtute et fide, had been a Roman of the old school who would have preferred exile after the battle of Philippi; and who, could he have foreseen modern New York and modern finance, would have been more content to die when he did. He had lived in Washington Square. His daughter inherited his executive ability, many of his prejudices (as they would now be called), and his habit of regarding favourable impressions with profound suspicion. She had never known the necessity of making friends: hers she had inherited, and for some reason specially decreed, they were better than those of less fortunate people.

Page 8

Mrs. Grainger was very tall. And Sargent, in his portrait of her, had caught with admirable art the indefinable, yet partly supercilious and scornful smile with which she looked down upon the world about her. She possessed the rare gift of combining conventionality with personal distinction in her dress. Her hair was almost Titian red in colour, and her face (on the authority of Mr. Reginald Farwell) was at once modern and Italian Renaissance. Not the languid, amorous Renaissance, but the lady of decision who chose, and did not wait to be chosen. Her eyes had all the colours of the tapaz, and her regard was so baffling as to arouse intense antagonism in those who were not her friends.

To Honora, groping about for a better and a higher life, the path of philanthropy had more than once suggested itself. And on the day of Peter's visit to New York, when she had lunched with Mrs. Holt, she had signified her willingness (now that she had come to live in town) to join the Working Girls' Relief Society. Mrs. Holt, needless to say, was overjoyed: they were to have a meeting at her house in the near future which Honora must not fail to attend. It was not, however, without a feeling of trepidation natural to a stranger that she made her way to that meeting when the afternoon arrived.

No sooner was she seated in Mrs. Holt's drawing-room—filled with camp-chairs for the occasion—than she found herself listening breathlessly to a recital of personal experiences by a young woman who worked in a bindery on the East side. Honora's heart was soft: her sympathies, as we know, easily aroused. And after the young woman had told with great simplicity and earnestness of the struggle to support herself and lead an honest and self-respecting existence, it seemed to Honora that at last she had opened the book of life at the proper page.

Afterwards there were questions, and a report by Miss Harber, a middle-aged lady with glasses who was the secretary. Honora looked around her. The membership of the Society, judging by those present, was surely of a sufficiently heterogeneous character to satisfy even the catholic tastes of her hostess. There were elderly ladies, some benevolent and some formidable, some bedecked and others unadorned; there were earnest-looking younger women, to whom dress was evidently a secondary consideration; and there was a sprinkling of others, perfectly gowned, several of whom were gathered in an opposite corner. Honora's eyes, as the reading of the report progressed, were drawn by a continual and resistless attraction to this group; or rather to the face of one of the women in it, which seemed to stare out at her like the eat in the tree of an old-fashioned picture puzzle, or the lineaments of George Washington among a mass of boulders on a cliff. Once one has discovered it, one can see nothing else. In vain Honora dropped her eyes; some strange fascination compelled her to raise them again until they met those of the other woman: Did their glances meet? She could never quite be sure, so disconcerting were the lights in that regard—lights, seemingly, of laughter and mockery.

Page 9

Some instinct informed Honora that the woman was Mrs. Grainger, and immediately the scene in the Holland House dining-room came back to her. Never until now had she felt the full horror of its comedy. And then, as though to fill the cup of humiliation, came the thought of Cecil Grainger's call. She longed, in an agony with which sensitive natures will sympathize, for the reading to be over.

The last paragraph of the report contained tributes to Mrs. Joshua Holt and Mrs. Cecil Grainger for the work each had done during the year, and amidst enthusiastic hand-clapping the formal part of the meeting came to an end. The servants were entering with tea as Honora made her way towards the door, where she was stopped by Susan Holt.

"My dear Honora," cried Mrs. Holt, who had hurried after her daughter, "you're not going?"

Honora suddenly found herself without an excuse.

"I really ought to, Mrs. Holt. I've had such a good time-and I've been so interested. I never realized that such things occurred. And I've got one of the reports, which I intend to read over again."

"But my dear," protested Mrs. Holt, "you must meet some of the members of the Society. Bessie!"

Mrs. Grainger, indeed—for Honora had been right in her surmise—was standing within ear-shot of this conversation. And Honora, who knew she was there, could not help feeling that she took a rather redoubtable interest in it. At Mrs. Holt's words she turned.

"Bessie, I've found a new recruit—one that I can answer for, Mrs. Spence, whom I spoke to you about."

Mrs. Grainger bestowed upon Honora her enigmatic smile.

"Oh," she declared, "I've heard of Mrs. Spence from other sources, and I've seen her, too."

Honora grew a fiery red. There was obviously no answer to such a remark, which seemed the quintessence of rudeness. But Mrs. Grainger continued to smile, and to stare at her with the air of trying to solve a riddle.

"I'm coming to see you, if I may," she said. "I've been intending to since I've been in town, but I'm always so busy that I don't get time to do the things I want to do."

An announcement that fairly took away Honora's breath. She managed to express her appreciation of Mrs. Grainger's intention, and presently found herself walking rapidly up-



town through swirling snow, somewhat dazed by the events of the afternoon. And these, by the way, were not yet finished. As she reached her own door, a voice vaguely familiar called her name.

“Honora!”

She turned. The slim, tall figure of a young woman descended from a carriage and crossed the pavement, and in the soft light of the vestibule she recognized Ethel Wing.

“I’m so glad I caught you,” said that young lady when they entered the drawing-room. And she gazed at her school friend. The colour glowed in Honora’s cheeks, but health alone could not account for the sparkle in her eyes. “Why, you look radiant. You are more beautiful than you were at Sutcliffe. Is it marriage?”



Page 10

Honora laughed happily, and they sat down side by side on the lounge behind the tea table.

"I heard you'd married," said Ethel, "but I didn't know what had become of you until the other day. Jim never tells me anything. It appears that he's seen something of you. But it wasn't from Jim that I heard about you first. You'd never guess who told me you were here."

"Who?" asked Honora, curiously.

"Mr. Erwin."

"Peter Erwin!"

"I'm perfectly shameless," proclaimed Ethel Wing. "I've lost my heart to him, and I don't care who knows it. Why in the world didn't you marry him?"

"But—where did you see him?" Honora demanded as soon as she could command herself sufficiently to speak. Her voice must have sounded odd. Ethel did not appear to notice that.

"He lunched with us one day when father had gout. Didn't he tell you about it? He said he was coming to see you that afternoon."

"Yes—he came. But he didn't mention being at lunch at your house."

"I'm sure that was like him," declared her friend. And for the first time in her life Honora experienced a twinge of that world-old ailment—jealousy. How did Ethel know what was like him? "I made father give him up for a little while after lunch, and he talked about you the whole time. But he was most interesting at the table," continued Ethel, sublimely unconscious of the lack of compliment in the comparison; "as Jim would say, he fairly wiped up the ground with father, and it isn't an easy thing to do."

"Wiped up the ground with Mr. Wing!" Honora repeated.

"Oh, in a delightfully quiet, humorous way. That's what made it so effective. I couldn't understand all of it; but I grasped enough to enjoy it hugely. Father's so used to bullying people that it's become second nature with him. I've seen him lay down the law to some of the biggest lawyers in New York, and they took it like little lambs. He caught a Tartar in Mr. Erwin. I didn't dare to laugh, but I wanted to."

"What was the discussion about?" asked Honora.

"I'm not sure that I can give you a very clear idea of it," said Ethel. "Generally speaking, it was about modern trust methods, and what a self-respecting lawyer would do and



what he wouldn't. Father took the ground that the laws weren't logical, and that they were different and conflicting, anyway, in different States. He said they impeded the natural development of business, and that it was justifiable for the great legal brains of the country to devise means by which these laws could be eluded. He didn't quite say that, but he meant it, and he honestly believes it. The manner in which Mr. Erwin refuted it was a revelation to me. I've been thinking about it since. You see, I'd never heard that side of the argument. Mr. Erwin said, in the nicest way possible, but very firmly, that a lawyer who hired himself out to enable one man to take advantage of another prostituted his talents: that the brains of the legal profession were out of politics in these days, and that it was almost impossible for the men in the legislatures to frame laws that couldn't be evaded by clever and unscrupulous devices. He cited ever so many cases . . . "



Page 11

Ethel's voice became indistinct, as though some one had shut a door in front of it. Honora was trembling on the brink of a discovery: holding herself back from it, as one who has climbed a fair mountain recoils from the lip of an unsuspected crater at sight of the lazy, sulphurous fumes. All the years of her marriage, ever since she had first heard his name, the stature of James Wing had been insensibly growing, and the vastness of his empire gradually disclosed. She had lived in that empire: in it his word had stood for authority, his genius had been worshipped, his decrees had been absolute.

She had met him once, in Howard's office, when he had greeted her gruffly, and the memory of his rugged features and small red eyes, like live coals, had remained. And she saw now the drama that had taken place before Ethel's eyes. The capitalist, overbearing, tyrannical, hearing a few, simple truths in his own house from Peter—her Peter. And she recalled her husband's account of his talk with James Wing. Peter had refused to sell himself. Had Howard? Many times during the days that followed she summoned her courage to ask her husband that question, and kept silence. She did not wish to know.

"I don't want to seem disloyal to papa," Ethel was saying. "He is under great responsibilities to other people, to stockholders; and he must get things done. But oh, Honora, I'm so tired of money, money, money and its standards, and the things people are willing to do for it. I've seen too much."

Honora looked at her friend, and believed her. One glance at the girl's tired eyes—a weariness somehow enhanced—in effect by the gold sheen of her hair—confirmed the truth of her words.

"You've changed, Ethel, since Sutcliffe," she said.

"Yes, I've changed," said Ethel Wing, and the weariness was in her voice, too. "I've had too much, Honora. Life was all glitter, like a Christmas tree, when I left Sutcliffe. I had no heart. I'm not at all sure that I have one now. I've known all kinds of people—except the right kind. And if I were to tell you some of the things that have happened to me in five years you wouldn't believe them. Money has been at the bottom of it all,—it ruined my brother, and it has ruined me. And then, the other day, I beheld a man whose standards simply take no account of money, a man who holds something else higher. I—I had been groping lately, and then I seemed to see clear for the first time in my life. But I'm afraid it comes too late."

Honora took her friend's hand in her own and pressed it.

"I don't know why I'm telling you all this," said Ethel: "It seems to-day as though I had always known you, and yet we weren't particularly intimate at school. I suppose I'm inclined to be oversuspicious. Heaven knows I've had enough to make me so. But I always thought that you were a little—ambitious. You'll forgive my frankness, Honora. I

don't think you're at all so, now." She glanced at Honora suddenly. "Perhaps you've changed, too," she said.

Page 12

Honora nodded.

“I think I’m changing all the time,” she replied.

After a moment’s silence, Ethel Wing pursued her own train of thought.

“Curiously enough when he—when Mr. Erwin spoke of you I seemed to get a very different idea of you than the one I had always had. I had to go out of town, but I made up my mind I’d come to see you as soon as I got back, and ask you to tell me something about him.”

“What shall I tell you?” asked Honora. “He is what you think he is, and more.”

“Tell me something of his early life,” said Ethel Wing.

.....

There is a famous river in the western part of our country that disappears into a canon, the walls of which are some thousands of feet high, and the bottom so narrow that the confined waters roar through it at breakneck speed. Sometimes they disappear entirely under the rock, to emerge again below more furiously than ever. From the river-bed can be seen, far, far above, a blue ribbon of sky. Once upon a time, not long ago, two heroes in the service of the government of the United States, whose names should be graven in the immortal rock and whose story read wherever the language is spoken, made the journey through this canon and came out alive. That journey once started, there could be no turning back. Down and down they were buffeted by the rushing waters, over the falls and through the tunnels, with time to think only of that which would save them from immediate death, until they emerged into the sunlight of the plain below.

All of which by way of parallel. For our own chronicle, hitherto leisurely enough, is coming to its canon—perhaps even now begins to feel the pressure of the shelving sides. And if our heroine be somewhat rudely tossed from one boulder to another, if we fail wholly to understand her emotions and her acts, we must blame the canon. She had, indeed, little time to think.

One evening, three weeks or so after the conversation with Ethel Wing just related, Honora’s husband entered her room as her maid was giving the finishing touches to her toilet.

“You’re not going to wear that dress!” he exclaimed.

“Why not?” she asked, without turning from the mirror.



He lighted a cigarette.

“I thought you’d put on something handsome—to go to the Graingers’. And where are your jewels? You’ll find the women there loaded with ’em.”

“One string of pearls is all I care to wear,” said Honora—a reply with which he was fain to be content until they were in the carriage, when she added: “Howard, I must ask you as a favour not to talk that way before the servants.”

“What way?” he demanded.

“Oh,” she exclaimed, “if you don’t know I suppose it is impossible to explain. You wouldn’t understand.”

“I understand one thing, Honora, that you’re too confoundedly clever for me,” he declared.

Page 13

Honora did not reply. For at that moment they drew up at a carpet stretched across the pavement.

Unlike the mansions of vast and imposing facades that were beginning everywhere to catch the eye on Fifth Avenue, and that followed mostly the continental styles of architecture, the house of the Cecil Graingers had a substantial, "middle-of-the-eighties" appearance. It stood on a corner, with a high iron fence protecting the area around it. Within, it gave one an idea of space that the exterior strangely belied; and it was furnished, not in a French, but in what might be called a comfortably English, manner. It was filled, Honora saw, with handsome and priceless things which did not immediately and aggressively strike the eye, but which somehow gave the impression of having always been there. What struck her, as she sat in the little withdrawing room while the maid removed her overshoes, was the note of permanence.

Some of those who were present at Mrs. Grainger's that evening remember her entrance into the drawing-room. Her gown, the colour of a rose-tinted cloud, set off the exceeding whiteness of her neck and arms and vied with the crimson in her cheeks, and the single glistening string of pearls about the slender column of her neck served as a contrast to the shadowy masses of her hair. Mr. Reginald Farwell, who was there, afterwards declared that she seemed to have stepped out of the gentle landscape of an old painting. She stood, indeed, hesitating for a moment in the doorway, her eyes softly alight, in the very pose of expectancy that such a picture suggested.

Honora herself was almost frightened by a sense of augury, of triumph, as she went forward to greet her hostess. Conversation, for the moment, had stopped. Cecil Grainger, with the air of one who had pulled aside the curtain and revealed this vision of beauty and innocence, crossed the room to welcome her. And Mrs. Grainger herself was not a little surprised; she was not a dramatic person, and it was not often that her drawing-room was the scene of even a mild sensation. No entrance could have been at once so startling and so unexceptionable as Honora's.

"I was sorry not to find you when I called," she said. "I was sorry, too," replied Mrs. Grainger, regarding her with an interest that was undisguised, and a little embarrassing. "I'm scarcely ever at home, except when I'm with the children. Do you know these people?"

"I'm not sure," said Honora, "but—I must introduce my husband to you."

"How d'ye do!" said Mr. Grainger, blinking at her when this ceremony was accomplished. "I'm awfully glad to see you, Mrs. Spence, upon my word."

Honora could not doubt it. But he had little time to express his joy, because of the appearance of his wife at Honora's elbow with a tall man she had summoned from a corner.

“Before we go to dinner I must introduce my cousin, Mr. Chiltern—he is to have the pleasure of taking you out,” she said.



Page 14

His name was in the class of those vaguely familiar: vaguely familiar, too, was his face. An extraordinary face, Honora thought, glancing at it as she took his arm, although she was struck by something less tangible than the unusual features. He might have belonged to any nationality within the limits of the Caucasian race. His short, kinky, black hair suggested great virility, an effect intensified by a strongly bridged nose, sinewy hands, and bushy eyebrows. But the intangible distinction was in the eyes that looked out from under these brows the glimpse she had of them as he bowed to her gravely, might be likened to the hasty reading of a chance page in a forbidden book. Her attention was arrested, her curiosity aroused. She was on that evening, so to speak, exposed for and sensitive to impressions. She was on the threshold of the Alhambra.

“Hugh has such a faculty,” complained Mr. Grainger, “of turning up at the wrong moment!”

Dinner was announced. She took Chiltern’s arm, and they fell into file behind a lady in yellow, with a long train, who looked at her rather hard. It was Mrs. Freddy Maitland. Her glance shifted to Chiltern, and it seemed to Honora that she started a little.

“Hello, Hugh,” she said indifferently, looking back over her shoulder; “have you turned up again?”

“Still sticking to the same side of your horse, I see.” he replied, ignoring the question. “I told you you’d get lop-sided.”

The deformity, if there were any, did not seem to trouble her.

“I’m going to Florida Wednesday. We want another man. Think it over.”

“Sorry, but I’ve got something else to do,” he said.

“The devil and idle hands,” retorted Mrs. Maitland.

Honora was sure as she could be that Chiltern was angry, although he gave no visible sign of this. It was as though the current ran from his arm into hers.

“Have you been away?” she asked.

“It seems to me as though I had never been anywhere else,” he answered, and he glanced curiously at the guests ranging about the great, flower-laden table. They sat down.

She was a little repelled, a little piqued; and a little relieved when the man on her other side spoke to her, and she recognized Mr. Reginald Farwell, the architect. The table capriciously swung that way. She did not feel prepared to talk to Mr. Chiltern. And



before entering upon her explorations she was in need of a guide. She could have found none more charming, none more impersonal, none more subtly aware of her wants (which had once been his) than Mr. Farwell. With his hair parted with geometrical precision from the back of his collar to his forehead, with his silky mustache and eyes of soft hazel lights, he was all things to all men and women—within reason. He was an achievement that civilization had not hitherto produced, a combination of the Beaux Arts and the Jockey Club and American adaptability. He was of those upon whom labour leaves no trace.

Page 15

There were preliminaries, mutually satisfactory. To see Mrs. Spence was never to forget her, but more delicately intimated. He remembered to have caught a glimpse of her at the Quicksands Club, and Mrs. Dallam nor her house were not mentioned by either. Honora could not have been in New York Long. No, it was her first winter, and she felt like a stranger. Would Mr. Farwell tell her who some of these people were? Nothing charmed Mr. Farwell so much as simplicity—when it was combined with personal attractions. He did not say so, but contrived to intimate the former.

“It’s always difficult when one first comes to New York,” he declared, “but it soon straightens itself out, and one is surprised at how few people there are, after all. We’ll begin on Cecil’s right. That’s Mrs. George Grenfell.”

“Oh, yes,” said Honora, looking at a tall, thin woman of middle age who wore a tiara, and whose throat was covered with jewels. Honora did not imply that Mrs. Grenfell’s name, and most of those that followed, were extremely familiar to her.

“In my opinion she’s got the best garden in Newport, and she did most of it herself. Next to her, with the bald head, is Freddy Maitland. Next to him is Miss Godfrey. She’s a little eccentric, but she can afford to be—the Godfreys for generations have done so much for the city. The man with the beard, next her, is John Laurens, the philanthropist. That pretty woman, who’s just as nice as she looks, is Mrs. Victor Strange. She was Agatha Pendleton—Mrs. Grainger’s cousin. And the gentleman with the pink face, whom she is entertaining—”

“Is my husband,” said Honora, smiling. “I know something about him.”

Mr. Farwell laughed. He admired her aplomb, and he did not himself change countenance. Indeed, the incident seemed rather to heighten the confidence between them. Honora was looking rather critically at Howard. It was a fact that his face did grow red at this stage of a dinner, and she wondered what Mrs. Strange found to talk to him about.

“And the woman on the other side of him?” she asked. “By the way, she has a red face, too.”

“So she has,” he replied amusedly. “That is Mrs. Littleton Pryor, the greatest living rebuke to the modern woman. Most of those jewels are inherited, but she has accustomed herself by long practice to carry them, as well as other burdens. She has eight children, and she’s on every charity list. Her ancestors were the very roots of Manhattan. She looks like a Holbein—doesn’t she?”

“And the extraordinary looking man on my right?” Honora asked. “I’ve got to talk to him presently.”



“Chiltern!” he said. “Is it possible you haven’t heard something about Hugh Chiltern?”

“Is it such lamentable ignorance?” she asked.

“That depends upon one’s point of view,” he replied. “He’s always been a sort of a—well, Viking,” said Farwell.

Honora was struck by the appropriateness of the word.



Page 16

“Viking—yes, he looks it exactly. I couldn’t think. Tell me something about him.”

“Well,” he laughed, lowering his voice a little, here goes for a little rough and ready editing. One thing about Chiltern that’s to be admired is that he’s never cared a rap what people think. Of course, in a way, he never had to. His family own a section of the state, where they’ve had woollen mills for a hundred years, more or less. I believe Hugh Chiltern has sold ’em, or they’ve gone into a trust, or something, but the estate is still there, at Grenoble—one of the most beautiful places I’ve ever seen. The General—this man’s father—was a violent, dictatorial man. There is a story about his taking a battery at Gettysburg which is almost incredible. But he went back to Grenoble after the war, and became the typical public-spirited citizen; built up the mills which his own pioneer grandfather had founded, and all that. He married an aunt of Mrs. Grainger’s, —one of those delicate, gentle women who never dare to call their soul their own.”

“And then?” prompted Honora, with interest.

“It’s only fair to Hugh,” Farwell continued, “to take his early years into account. The General never understood him, and his mother died before he went off to school. Men who were at Harvard with him say he has a brilliant mind, but he spent most of his time across the Charles River breaking things. It was, probably, the energy the General got rid of at Gettysburg. What Hugh really needed was a war, and he had too much money. He has a curious literary streak, I’m told, and wrote a rather remarkable article—I’ve forgotten just where it appeared. He raced a yacht for a while in a dare-devil, fiendish way, as one might expect; and used to go off on cruises and not be heard of for months. At last he got engaged to Sally Harrington—Mrs. Freddy Maitland.”

Honora glanced across the table.

“Exactly,” said Mr. Farwell. “That was seven or eight years ago. Nobody ever knew the reason why she broke it—though it may have been pretty closely guessed. He went away, and nobody’s laid eyes on him until he turned up to-night.”

Honora’s innocence was not too great to enable her to read between the lines of this biography which Reginald Farwell had related with such praiseworthy delicacy. It was a biography, she well knew, that, like a score of others, had been guarded as jealously as possible within the circle on the borders of which she now found herself. Mrs. Grainger with her charities, Mrs. Littleton Pryor with her good works, Miss Godfrey with her virtue—all swallowed it as gracefully as possible. Noblesse oblige. Honora had read French and English memoirs, and knew that history repeats itself. And a biography that is printed in black letter and illuminated in gold is attractive in spite of its contents. The contents, indeed, our heroine had not found uninteresting, and she turned now to the subject with a flutter of anticipation.



Page 17

He looked at her intently, almost boldly, she thought, and before she dropped her eyes she had made a discovery. The thing stamped upon his face and burning in his eyes was not world-weariness, disappointment, despair. She could not tell what it was, yet; that it was none of these, she knew. It was not unrelated to experience, but transcended it. There was an element of purpose in it, of determination, almost—she would have believed—of hope. That Mrs. Maitland nor any other woman was a part of it she became equally sure. Nothing could have been more commonplace than the conversation which began, and yet it held for her, between the lines as in the biography, the thrill of interest. She was a woman, and embarked on a voyage of discovery.

“Do you live in New York?” he asked.

“Yes,” said Honora, “since this autumn.”

“I’ve been away a good many years,” he said, in explanation of his question. “I haven’t quite got my bearings. I can’t tell you how queerly this sort of thing affects me.”

“You mean civilization?” she hazarded.

“Yes. And yet I’ve come back to it.”

Of course she did not ask him why. Their talk was like the starting of a heavy train—a series of jerks; and yet both were aware of an irresistible forward traction. She had not recovered from her surprise in finding herself already so far in his confidence.

“And the time will come, I suppose, when you’ll long to get away again.”

“No,” he said, “I’ve come back to stay. It’s taken me a long while to learn it, but there’s only one place for a man, and that’s his own country.”

Her eyes lighted.

“There’s always so much for a man to do.”

“What would you do?” he asked curiously.

She considered this.

“If you had asked me that question two years ago—even a year ago—I should have given you a different answer. It’s taken me some time to learn it, too, you see, and I’m not a man. I once thought I should have liked to have been a king amongst money changers, and own railroad and steamship lines, and dominate men by sheer power.”

He was clearly interested.



“And now?” he prompted her.

She laughed a little, to relieve the tension.

“Well—I’ve found out that there are some men that kind of power can’t control—the best kind. And I’ve found out that that isn’t the best kind of power. It seems to be a brutal, barbarous cunning power now that I’ve seen it at close range. There’s another kind that springs from a man himself, that speaks through his works and acts, that influences first those around him, and then his community, convincing people of their own folly, and that finally spreads in ever widening circles to those whom he cannot see, and never will see.”

She paused, breathing deeply, a little frightened at her own eloquence. Something told her that she was not only addressing her own soul—she was speaking to his.



Page 18

"I'm afraid you'll think I'm preaching," she apologized.

"No," he said impatiently, "no."

"To answer your question, then, if I were a man of independent means, I think I should go into politics. And I should put on my first campaign banner the words, 'No Compromise.'"

It was a little strange that, until now—to-night-she had not definitely formulated these ambitions. The idea of the banner with its inscription had come as an inspiration. He did not answer, but sat regarding her, drumming on the cloth with his strong, brown fingers.

"I have learned this much in New York," she said, carried on by her impetus, "that men and women are like plants. To be useful, and to grow properly, they must be firmly rooted in their own soil. This city seems to me like a luxurious, overgrown hothouse. Of course," she added hastily, "there are many people who belong here, and whose best work is done here. I was thinking about those whom it attracts. And I have seen so many who are only watered and fed and warmed, and who become —distorted."

"It's extraordinary," replied Chiltern, slowly, "that you should say this to me. It is what I have come to believe, but I couldn't have said it half so well."

Mrs. Grainger gave the signal to rise. Honora took Chiltern's arm, and he led her back to the drawing-room. She was standing alone by the fire when Mrs. Maitland approached her.

"Haven't I seen you before?" she asked.

CHAPTER III

VINELAND

It was a pleasant Newport to which Honora went early in June, a fair city shining in the midst of summer seas, a place to light the fires of imagination. It wore at once an air of age, and of a new and sparkling unreality. Honora found in the very atmosphere a certain magic which she did not try to define, but to the enjoyment of which she abandoned herself; and in those first days after her arrival she took a sheer delight in driving about the island. Narrow Thames Street, crowded with gay carriages, with its aspect of the eighteenth and its shops of the twentieth century; the whiffs of the sea; Bellevue Avenue, with its glorious serried ranks of trees, its erring perfumes from bright gardens, its massed flowering shrubs beckoning the eye, its lawns of a truly enchanted green. Through tree and hedge, as she drove, came ever changing glimpses of gleaming palace fronts; glimpses that made her turn and look again; that stimulated but



did not satisfy, and left a pleasant longing for something on the seeming verge of fulfilment.

The very stillness and solitude that seemed to envelop these palaces suggested the enchanter's wand. To-morrow, perhaps, the perfect lawns where the robins hopped amidst the shrubbery would become again the rock-bound, windswept New England pasture above the sea, and screaming gulls circle where now the swallows hovered about the steep blue roof of a French chateau. Hundreds of years hence, would these great pleasure houses still be standing behind their screens and walls and hedges? or would, indeed, the shattered, vine-covered marble of a balustrade alone mark the crumbling terraces whence once the fabled owners scanned the sparkling waters of the ocean? Who could say?



Page 19

The onward rush of our story between its canon walls compels us reluctantly to skip the narrative of the winter conquests of the lady who is our heroine. Popularity had not spoiled her, and the best proof of this lay in the comments of a world that is nothing if not critical. No beauty could have received with more modesty the triumph which had greeted her at Mrs. Grenfell's tableaux, in April, when she had appeared as Circe, in an architectural frame especially designed by Mr. Farwell himself. There had been a moment of hushed astonishment, followed by an acclaim that sent the curtain up twice again.

We must try to imagine, too, the logical continuation of that triumph in the Baiae of our modern republic and empire, Newport. Open, Sesame! seems, as ever, to be the countersign of her life. Even the palace gates swung wide to her: most of them with the more readiness because she had already passed through other gates—Mrs. Grainger's, for instance. Baiae, apparently, is a topsy-turvy world in which, if one alights upside down, it is difficult to become righted. To alight upside down, is to alight in a palace. The Graingers did not live in one, but in a garden that existed before the palaces were, and one that the palace owners could not copy: a garden that three generations of Graingers, somewhat assisted by a remarkable climate, had made with loving care. The box was priceless, the spreading trees in the miniature park no less so, and time, the unbribeable, alone could now have produced the wide, carefully cherished Victorian mansion. Likewise not purchasable by California gold was a grandfather whose name had been written large in the pages of American history. His library was now lined with English sporting prints; but these, too, were old and mellow and rare.

To reach Honora's cottage, you turned away from the pomp and glitter and noise of Bellevue Avenue into the inviting tunnel of a leafy lane that presently stopped of itself. As though to provide against the contingency of a stray excursionist, a purple-plumed guard of old lilac trees massed themselves before the house, and seemed to look down with contempt on the new brick wall across the lane. 'Odi profanum vulgus'. It was on account of the new brick wall, in fact, that Honora, through the intervention of Mrs. Grainger and Mrs. Shorter, had been able to obtain this most desirable of retreats, which belonged to a great-aunt of Miss Godfrey, Mrs. Forsythe.

Mr. Chamberlin, none other than he of whom we caught a glimpse some years ago in a castle near Silverdale, owned the wall and the grounds and the palace it enclosed. This gentleman was of those who arrive in Newport upside down; and was even now, with the somewhat doubtful assistance of his wife, making lavish and pathetic attempts to right himself. Newport had never forgiven him for the razing of a mansion and the felling of trees which had been landmarks, and for the driving out of Mrs. Forsythe. The mere sight of the modern wall had been too much for this lady—the lilacs and the leaves in the lane mercifully hid the palace—and after five and thirty peaceful summers she had moved out, and let the cottage. It was furnished with delightful old-fashioned things that seemed to express, at every turn, the aristocratic and uncompromising personality of the owner who had lived so long in their midst.



Page 20

Mr. Chamberlin, who has nothing whatever to do with this chronicle except to have been the indirect means of Honora's installation, used to come through the wall once a week or so to sit for half an hour on her porch as long as he ever sat anywhere. He had reddish side-whiskers, and he reminded her of a buzzing toy locomotive wound up tight and suddenly taken from the floor. She caught glimpses of him sometimes in the mornings buzzing around his gardeners, his painters, his carpenters, and his grooms. He would buzz the rest of his life, but nothing short of a revolution could take his possessions away.

The Graingers and the Grenfells and the Stranges might move mountains, but not Mr. Chamberlin's house. Whatever heart-burnings he may have had because certain people refused to come to his balls, he was in Newport to remain. He would sit under the battlements until the crack of doom; or rather—and more appropriate in Mr. Chamberlin's case—walk around them and around, blowing trumpets until they capitulated.

Honora magically found herself within them, and without a siege. Behold her at last in the setting for which we always felt she was destined. Why is it, in this world, that realization is so difficult a thing? Now that she is there, how shall we proceed to give the joys of her Elysium their full value? Not, certainly, by repeating the word pleasure over and over again: not by describing the palaces at which she lunched and danced and dined, or the bright waters in which she bathed, or the yachts in which she sailed. During the week, indeed, she moved untrammelled in a world with which she found herself in perfect harmony: it was new, it was dazzling, it was unexplored. During the week it possessed still another and more valuable attribute—it was real. And she, Honora Leffingwell Spence, was part and parcel of its permanence. The life relationships of the people by whom she was surrounded became her own. She had little time for thought—during the week.

We are dealing, now, in emotions as delicate as cloud shadows, and these drew on as Saturday approached. On Saturdays and Sundays the quality and texture of life seemed to undergo a change. Who does not recall the Monday mornings of the school days of youth, and the indefinite feeling betwixt sleep and waking that to-day would not be as yesterday or the day before? On Saturday mornings, when she went downstairs, she was wont to find the porch littered with newspapers and her husband lounging in a wicker chair behind the disapproving lilacs. Although they had long ceased to bloom, their colour was purple—his was pink.

Honora did not at first analyze or define these emotions, and was conscious only of a stirring within her, and a change. Reality became unreality. The house in which she lived, and for which she felt a passion of ownership, was for two days a rented house. Other women in Newport had week-end guests in the guise of husbands, and some of them went so far as to bewail the fact. Some had got rid of them. Honora kissed hers dutifully, and picked up the newspapers, drove him to the beach, and took him out to

dinner, where he talked oracularly of finance. On Sunday night he departed, without visible regrets, for New York.

Page 21

One Monday morning a storm was raging over Newport. Seized by a sudden whim, she rang her bell, breakfasted at an unusual hour, and nine o'clock found her, with her skirts flying, on the road above the cliffs that leads to the Fort. The wind had increased to a gale, and as she stood on the rocks the harbour below her was full of tossing white yachts straining at their anchors. Serene in the midst of all this hubbub lay a great grey battleship.

Presently, however, her thoughts were distracted by the sight of something moving rapidly across her line of vision. A sloop yacht, with a ridiculously shortened sail, was coming in from the Narrows, scudding before the wind like a frightened bird. She watched its approach in a sort of fascination, for of late she had been upon the water enough to realize that the feat of which she was witness was not without its difficulties. As the sloop drew nearer she made out a bare-headed figure bent tensely at the wheel, and four others clinging to the yellow deck. In a flash the boat had rounded to, the mainsail fell, and a veil of spray hid the actors of her drama. When it cleared the yacht was tugging like a wild thing at its anchor.

That night was Mrs. Grenfell's ball, and many times in later years has the scene come back to Honora. It was not a large ball, by no means on the scale of Mr. Chamberlin's, for instance. The great room reminded one of the gallery of a royal French chateau, with its dished ceiling, in the oval of which the colours of a pastoral fresco glowed in the ruby lights of the heavy chandeliers; its grey panelling, hidden here and there by tapestries, and its series of deep, arched windows that gave glimpses of a lantern-hung terrace. Out there, beyond a marble balustrade, the lights of fishing schooners tossed on a blue-black ocean. The same ocean on which she had looked that morning, and which she heard now, in the intervals of talk and laughter, crashing against the cliffs,—although the wind had gone down. Like a woman stirred to the depths of her being, its bosom was heaving still at the memory of the passion of the morning.

This night after the storm was capriciously mild, the velvet gown of heaven sewn with stars. The music had ceased, and supper was being served at little tables on the terrace. The conversation was desultory.

"Who is that with Reggie Farwell?" Ethel Wing asked.

"It's the Farrenden girl," replied Mr. Cuthbert, whose business it was to know everybody. "Chicago wheat. She looks like Ceres, doesn't she? Quite becoming to Reggie's dark beauty. She was sixteen, they tell me, when the old gentleman emerged from the pit, and they packed her off to a convent by the next steamer. Reggie may have the blissful experience of living in one of his own houses if he marries her."

The fourth at the table was Ned Carrington, who had been first secretary at an Embassy, and he had many stories to tell of ambassadors who spoke commercial American and asked royalties after their wives. Some one had said about him that he

was the only edition of the Almanach de Gotha that included the United States. He somewhat resembled a golden seal emerging from a cold bath, and from time to time screwed an eyeglass into his eye and made a careful survey of Mrs. Grenfell's guests.



Page 22

“By George!” he exclaimed. “Isn’t that Hugh Chiltern?”

Honora started, and followed the direction of Mr. Carrington’s glance. At sight of him, a vivid memory of the man’s personality possessed her.

“Yes,” Cuthbert was saying, “that’s Chiltern sure enough. He came in on Dicky Farnham’s yacht this morning from New York.”

“This morning!” said Ethel Wing. “Surely not! No yacht could have come in this morning.”

“Nobody but Chiltern would have brought one in, you mean,” he corrected her. “He sailed her. They say Dicky was half dead with fright, and wanted to put in anywhere. Chiltern sent him below and kept right on. He has a devil in him, I believe. By the way, that’s Dicky Farnham’s ex-wife he’s talking to—Adele. She keeps her good looks, doesn’t she? What’s happened to Rindge?”

“Left him on the other side, I hear,” said Carrington. “Perhaps she’ll take Chiltern next. She looked as though she were ready to. And they say it’s easier every time.”

“C’est le second mari qui coute,” paraphrased Cuthbert, tossing his cigar over the balustrade. The strains of a waltz floated out of the windows, the groups at the tables broke up, and the cotillon began.

As Honora danced, Chiltern remained in the back of her mind, or rather an indefinite impression was there which in flashes she connected with him. She wondered, at times, what had become of him, and once or twice she caught herself scanning the bewildering, shifting sheen of gowns and jewels for his face. At last she saw him by the windows, holding a favour in his hand, coming in her direction. She looked away, towards the red uniforms of the Hungarian band on the raised platform at the end of the room. He was standing beside her.

“Do you remember me, Mrs. Spence?” he asked.

She glanced up at him and smiled. He was not a person one would be likely to forget, but she did not say so.

“I met you at Mrs. Granger’s,” was what she said.

He handed her the favour. She placed it amongst the collection at the back of her chair and rose, and they danced. Was it dancing? The music throbbed; nay, the musicians seemed suddenly to have been carried out of themselves, and played as they had not played before. Her veins were filled with pulsing fire as she was swung, guided, carried out of herself by the extraordinary virility of the man who held her. She had tasted mastery.



“Thank you,” she faltered, as they came around the second time to her seat.

He released her.

“I stayed to dance with you,” he said. “I had to await my opportunity.”

“It was kind of you to remember me,” she replied, as she went off with Mr. Carrington.

A moment later she saw him bidding good night to his hostess. His face, she thought, had not lost that strange look of determination that she recalled. And yet—how account for his recklessness?



Page 23

“Rum chap, Chiltern,” remarked Carrington. “He might be almost anything, if he only knew it.”

In the morning, when she awoke, her eye fell on the cotillon favours scattered over the lounge. One amongst them stood out—a silver-mounted pin-cushion. Honora arose, picked it up contemplatively, stared at it awhile, and smiled. Then she turned to her window, breathing in the perfumes, gazing out through the horse-chestnut leaves at the green, shadow-dappled lawn below.

On her breakfast tray, amidst some invitations, was a letter from her uncle. This she opened first.

“Dear Honora,” he wrote, “amongst your father’s papers, which have been in my possession since his death, was a certificate for three hundred shares in a land company. He bought them for very little, and I had always thought them worthless. It turns out that these holdings are in a part of the state of Texas that is now being developed; on the advice of Mr. Isham and others I have accepted an offer of thirty dollars a share, and I enclose a draft on New York for nine thousand dollars. I need not dwell upon the pleasure it is for me to send you this legacy from your father. And I shall only add the counsel of an old uncle, to invest this money by your husband’s advice in some safe securities.” . . .

Honora put down the letter, and sat staring at the cheque in her hand. Nine thousand dollars—and her own! Her first impulse was to send it back to her uncle. But that would be, she knew, to hurt his feelings—he had taken such a pride in handing her this inheritance. She read the letter again, and resolved that she would not ask Howard to invest the money. This, at least, should be her very own, and she made up her mind to take it to a bank in Thames Street that morning.

While she was still under the influence of the excitement aroused by the unexpected legacy, Mrs. Shorter came in, a lady with whom Honora’s intimacy had been of steady growth. The tie between them might perhaps have been described as intellectual, for Elsie Shorter professed only to like people who were “worth while.” She lent Honora French plays, discussed them with her, and likewise a wider range of literature, including certain brightly bound books on evolution and sociology.

In the eighteenth century, Mrs. Shorter would have had a title and a salon in the Faubourg: in the twentieth, she was the wife of a most fashionable and successful real estate agent in New York, and was aware of no incongruity. Bourgeoise was the last thing that could be said of her; she was as ready as a George Sand to discuss the whole range of human emotions; which she did many times a week with certain gentlemen of intellectual bent who had the habit of calling on her. She had never, to the knowledge of her acquaintances, been shocked. But while she believed that a great love carried, mysteriously concealed in its flame, its own pardon, she had through some



fifteen years of married life remained faithful to Jerry Shorter: who was not, to say the least, a Lochinvar or a Roland. Although she had had nervous prostration and was thirty-four, she was undeniably pretty. She was of the suggestive, and not the strong-minded type, and the secret of her strength with the other sex was that she was in the habit of submitting her opinions for their approval.



Page 24

“My dear,” she said to Honora, “you may thank heaven that you are still young enough to look beautiful in negligee. How far have you got? Have you guessed of which woman Vivarce was the lover? And isn’t it the most exciting play you’ve ever read? Ned Carrington saw it in Paris, and declares it frightened him into being good for a whole week!”

“Oh, Elsie,” exclaimed Honora, apologetically, “I haven’t read a word of it.”

Mrs. Shorter glanced at the pile of favours.

“How was the dance?” she asked. “I was too tired to go. Hugh Chiltern offered to take me.”

“I saw Mr. Chiltern there. I met him last winter at the Graingers’.”

“He’s staying with us,” said Mrs. Shorter; “you know he’s a sort of cousin of Jerry’s, and devoted to him. He turned up yesterday morning on Dicky Farnham’s yacht, in the midst of all that storm. It appears that Dicky met him in New York, and Hugh said he was coming up here, and Dicky offered to sail him up. When the storm broke they were just outside, and all on board lost their heads, and Hugh took charge and sailed in. Dicky told me that himself.”

“Then it wasn’t—recklessness,” said Honora, involuntarily. But Mrs. Shorter did not appear to be surprised by the remark.

“That’s what everybody thinks, of course,” she answered. “They say that he had a chance to run in somewhere, and browbeat Dicky into keeping on for Newport at the risk of their lives. They do Hugh an injustice. He might have done that some years ago, but he’s changed.”

Curiosity got the better of Honora.

“Changed?” she repeated.

“Of course you didn’t know him in the old days, Honora,” said Mrs. Shorter. “You wouldn’t recognize him now. I’ve seen a good deal of men, but he is the most interesting and astounding transformation I’ve ever known.”

“How?” asked Honora. She was sitting before the glass, with her hand raised to her hair.

Mrs. Shorter appeared puzzled.

“That’s what interests me,” she said. “My dear, don’t you think life tremendously interesting? I do. I wish I could write a novel. Between ourselves, I’ve tried. I had Mr.



Dewing send it to a publisher, who said it was clever, but had no plot. If I only could get a plot!"

Honora laughed.

"How would I The Transformation of Mr. Chiltern' do, Elsie?"

"If I only knew what's happened to him, and how he's going to end!" sighed Mrs. Shorter.

"You were saying," said Honora, for her friend seemed to have relapsed into a contemplation of this problem, "you were saying that he had changed."



Page 25

“He goes away for seven years, and he suddenly turns up filled with ambition and a purpose in life, something he had never dreamed of. He’s been at Grenoble, where the Chiltern estate is, making improvements and preparing to settle down there. And he’s actually getting ready to write a life of his father, the General—that’s the most surprising thing! They never met but to strike fire while the General was alive. It appears that Jerry and Cecil Grainger and one or two other people have some of the old gentleman’s letters, and that’s the reason why Hugh’s come to Newport. And the strangest thing about it, my dear,” added Mrs. Shorter, inconsequently, “is that I don’t think it’s a love affair.”

Honora laughed again. It was the first time she had ever heard Mrs. Shorter attribute unusual human phenomena to any other source. “He wrote Jerry that he was coming back to live on the estate,—from England. And he wasn’t there a week. I can’t think where he’s seen any women—that is,” Mrs. Shorter corrected herself hastily, “of his own class. He’s been in the jungle—India, Africa, Cores. That was after Sally Harrington broke the engagement. And I’m positive he’s not still in love with Sally. She lunched with me yesterday, and I watched him. Oh, I should have known it. But Sally hasn’t got over it. It wasn’t a grand passion with Hugh. I don’t believe he’s ever had such a thing. Not that he isn’t capable of it—on the contrary, he’s one of the few men I can think of who is.”

At this point in the conversation Honora thought that her curiosity had gone far enough.

CHAPTER IV

THE VIKING

She was returning on foot from the bank in Thames Street, where she had deposited her legacy, when she met him who had been the subject of her conversation with Mrs. Shorter. And the encounter seemed—and was—the most natural thing in the world. She did not stop to ask herself why it was so fitting that the Viking should be a part of Vineland: why his coming should have given it the one and final needful touch. For that designation of Reginald Farwell’s had come back to her. Despite the fact that Hugh Chiltern had with such apparent resolution set his face towards literature and the tillage of the land, it was as the Viking still that her imagination pictured him. By these tokens we may perceive that this faculty of our heroine’s has been at work, and her canvas already sketched in.

Whether by design or accident he was at the leafy entrance of her lane she was not to know. She spied him standing there; and in her leisurely approach a strange conceit of reincarnation possessed her, and she smiled at the contrast thus summoned up. Despite the jingling harnesses of Bellevue Avenue and the background of Mr. Chamberlin’s palace wall; despite the straw hat and white trousers and blue double-



breasted serge coat in which he was conventionally arrayed, he was the sea fighter still —of all the ages. M. Vipsanius Agrippa, who had won an empire for Augustus, had just such a head.



Page 26

Their greeting, too, was conventional enough, and he turned and walked with her up the lane, and halted before the lilacs. "You have Mrs. Forsythe's house," he said. "How well I remember it! My mother used to bring me here years ago."

"Won't you come in?" asked Honora, gently.

He seemed to have forgotten her as they mounted in silence to the porch, and she watched him with curious feelings as he gazed about him, and peered through the windows into the drawing-room.

"It's just as it was," he said. "Even the furniture. I'm glad you haven't moved it. They used to sit over there in the corner, and have tea on the ebony table. And it was always dark—just as it is now. I can see them. They wore dresses with wide skirts and flounces, and queer low collars and bonnets. And they talked in subdued voices—unlike so many women in these days."

She was a little surprised, and moved, by the genuine feeling with which he spoke.

"I was most fortunate to get the house," she answered. "And I have grown to love it. Sometimes it seems as though I had always lived here."

"Then you don't envy that," he said, flinging his hand towards an opening in the shrubbery which revealed a glimpse of one of the pilasters of the palace across the way. The instinct of tradition which had been the cause of Mrs. Forsythe's departure was in him, too. He, likewise, seemed to belong to the little house as he took one of the wicker chairs.

"Not," said Honora, "when I can have this."

She was dressed in white, her background of lilac leaves. Seated on the railing, with the tip of one toe resting on the porch, she smiled down at him from under the shadows of her wide hat.

"I didn't think you would," he declared. "This place seems to suit you, as I imagined you. I have thought of you often since we first met last winter."

"Yes," she replied hastily, "I am very happy here. Mrs. Shorter tells me you are staying with them."

"When I saw you again last night," he continued, ignoring her attempt to divert the stream from his channel, "I had a vivid impression as of having just left you. Have you ever felt that way about people?"

"Yes," she admitted, and poked the toe of her boot with her parasol.



“And then I find you in this house, which has so many associations for me. Harmoniously here,” he added, “if you know what I mean. Not a newcomer, but some one who must always have been logically expected.”

She glanced at him quickly, with parted lips. It was she who had done most of the talking at Mrs. Grainger’s dinner; and the imaginative quality of mind he was now revealing was unlooked for. She was surprised not to find it out of character. It is a little difficult to know what she expected of him, since she did not know herself the methods, perhaps; of the Viking in Longfellow’s poem. She was aware, at least, that she had attracted him, and she was beginning to realize it was not a thing that could be done lightly. This gave her a little flutter of fear.

Page 27

“Are you going to be long in Newport?” she asked.

“I am leaving on Friday,” he replied. “It seems strange to be here again after so many years. I find I’ve got out of touch with it. And I haven’t a boat, although Farnham’s been kind enough to offer me his.”

“I can’t imagine you, somehow, without a boat,” she said, and added hastily: “Mrs. Shorter was speaking of you this morning, and said that you were always on the water when you were here. Newport must have been quite different then.”

He accepted the topic, and during the remainder of his visit she succeeded in keeping the conversation in the middle ground, although she had a sense of the ultimate futility of the effort; a sense of pressure being exerted, no matter what she said. She presently discovered, however, that the taste for literature attributed to him which had seemed so incongruous—existed. He spoke with a new fire when she led him that way, albeit she suspected that some of the fuel was derived from the revelation that she shared his liking for books. As the extent of his reading became gradually disclosed, however, her feeling of inadequacy grew, and she resolved in the future to make better use of her odd moments. On her table, in two green volumes, was the life of a Massachusetts statesman that Mrs. Shorter had lent her. She picked it up after Chiltern had gone. He had praised it.

He left behind him a blurred portrait on her mind, as that of two men superimposed. And only that morning he had had such a distinct impression of one. It was from a consideration of this strange phenomenon, with her book lying open in her lap, that her maid aroused her to go to Mrs. Pryor’s. This was Tuesday.

Some of the modern inventions we deem most marvellous have been fitted for ages to man and woman. Woman, particularly, possesses for instance a kind of submarine bell; and, if she listens, she can at times hear it tinkling faintly. And the following morning, Wednesday, Honora heard hers when she received an invitation to lunch at Mrs. Shorter’s. After a struggle, she refused, but Mrs. Shorter called her up over the telephone, and she yielded.

“I’ve got Alfred Dewing for myself,” said Elsie Shorter, as she greeted Honora in the hall. “He writes those very clever things—you’ve read them. And Hugh for you,” she added significantly.

The Shorter cottage, though commodious, was simplicity itself. From the vine-covered pergola where they lunched they beheld the distant sea like a lavender haze across the flats. And Honora wondered whether there were not an element of truth in what Mr. Dewing said of their hostess—that she thought nothing immoral except novels with happy endings. Chiltern did not talk much: he looked at Honora.

“Hugh has got so serious,” said Elsie Shorter, “that sometimes I’m actually afraid of him. You ought to have done something to be as serious as that, Hugh.”



Page 28

“Done something!”

“Written the ‘Origin of Species,’ or founded a new political party, or executed a coup d’etat. Half the time I’m under the delusion that I’m entertaining a celebrity under my roof, and I wake up and it’s only Hugh.”

“It’s because he looks as though he might do any of those things,” suggested Mr. Deming. “Perhaps he may.”

“Oh,” said Elsie Shorter, “the men who do them are usually little wobbly specimens.”

Honora was silent, watching Chiltern. At times the completeness of her understanding of him gave her an uncanny sensation; and again she failed to comprehend him at all. She felt his anger go to a white heat, but the others seemed blissfully unaware of the fact. The arrival of coffee made a diversion.

“You and Hugh may have the pergola, Honora. I’ll take Mr. Deming into the garden.”

“I really ought to go in a few minutes, Elsie,” said Honora.

“What nonsense!” exclaimed Mrs. Shorter. “If it’s bridge at the Playfairs’, I’ll telephone and get you out of it.”

“No—”

“Then I don’t see where you can be going,” declared Mrs. Shorter, and departed with her cavalier.

“Why are you so anxious to get away?” asked Chiltern, abruptly.

Honora coloured.

“Oh—did I seem so? Elsie has such a mania for pairing people off-sometimes it’s quite embarrassing.”

“She was a little rash in assuming that you’d rather talk to me,” he said, smiling.

“You were not consulted, either.”

“I was consulted before lunch,” he replied.

“You mean—?”

“I mean that I wanted you,” he said. She had known it, of course. The submarine bell had told her. And he could have found no woman in Newport who would have brought more enthusiasm to his aid than Elsie Shorter.



“And you usually—get what you want,” she retorted with a spark of rebellion.

“Yes,” he admitted. “Only hitherto I haven’t wanted very desirable things.”

She laughed, but her curiosity got the better of her.

“Hitherto,” she said, “you have just taken what you desired.”

From the smouldering fires in his eyes darted an arrowpoint of flame.

“What kind of a man are you?” she asked, throwing the impersonal to the winds.

“Somebody called you a Viking once.”

“Who?” he demanded.

“It doesn’t matter. I’m beginning to think the name singularly appropriate. It wouldn’t be the first time one landed in Newport, according to legend,” she added.

“I haven’t read the poem since childhood,” said Chiltern, looking at her fixedly, “but he became—domesticated, if I remember rightly.”

“Yes,” she admitted, “the impossible happened to him, as it usually does in books. And then, circumstances helped. There were no other women.”

“When the lady died,” said Chiltern, “he fell upon his spear.”



Page 29

“The final argument for my theory,” declared Honora.

“On the contrary,” he maintained, smiling, “it proves there is always one woman for every man—if he can find her. If this man had lived in modern times, he would probably have changed from a Captain Kidd into a useful citizen of the kind you once said you admired.”

“Is a woman necessary,” she asked, “for the transformation?”

He looked at her so intently that she blushed to the hair clustering at her temples. She had not meant that her badinage should go so deep.

“It was not a woman,” he said slowly, “that brought me back to America.”

“Oh,” she exclaimed, suffused, “I hope you won’t think that curiosity” —and got no farther.

He was silent a moment, and when she ventured to glance up at him one of those enigmatical changes had taken place. He was looking at her gravely, though intently, and the Viking had disappeared.

“I wanted you to know,” he answered. “You must have heard more or less about me. People talk. Naturally these things haven’t been repeated to me, but I dare say many of them are true. I haven’t been a saint, and I don’t pretend to be now. I’ve never taken the trouble to deceive any one. And I’ve never cared, I’m sorry to say, what was said. But I’d like you to believe that when I agreed with with the sentiments you expressed the first time I saw you, I was sincere. And I am still sincere.”

“Indeed, I do believe it!” cried Honora.

His face lighted.

“You seemed different from the other women I had known—of my generation, at least,” he went on steadily. “None of them could have spoken as you did. I had just landed that morning, and I should have gone direct to Grenoble, but there was some necessary business to be attended to in New York. I didn’t want to go to Bessie’s dinner, but she insisted. She was short of a man. I went. I sat next to you, and you interpreted my mind. It seemed too extraordinary not to have had a significance.”

Honora did not reply. She felt instinctively that he was a man who was not wont ordinarily to talk about his affairs. Beneath his speech was an undercurrent—or undertow, perhaps—carrying her swiftly, easily, helpless into the deep waters of intimacy. For the moment she let herself go without a struggle. Her silence was of a breathless quality which he must have felt.



“And I am going to tell you why I came home,” he said. “I have spoken of it to nobody, but I wish you to know that it had nothing to do with any ordinary complication these people may invent. Nor was there anything supernatural about it: what happened to me, I suppose, is as old a story as civilization itself. I’d been knocking about the world for a good many years, and I’d had time to think. One day I found myself in the interior of China with a few coolies and a man who I suspect was a ticket-of-leave Englishman.
I



Page 30

can see the place now the yellow fog, the sand piled up against the wall like yellow snow. Desolation was a mild name for it. I think I began with a consideration of the Englishman who was asleep in the shadow of a tower. There was something inconceivably hopeless in his face in that ochre light. Then the place where I was born and brought up came to me with a startling completeness, and I began to go over my own life, step by step. To make a long story short, I perceived that what my father had tried to teach me, in his own way, had some reason in it. He was a good deal of a man. I made up my mind I'd come home and start in where I belonged. But I didn't do so right away—I finished the trip first, and lent the Englishman a thousand pounds to buy into a firm in Shanghai. I suppose," he added, "that is what is called suggestion. In my case it was merely the cumulative result of many reflections in waste places."

"And since then?"

"Since then I have been at Grenoble, making repairs and trying to learn something about agriculture. I've never been as happy in my life."

"And you're going back on Friday," she said.

He glanced at her quickly. He had detected the note in her speech: though lightly uttered, it was unmistakably a command. She tried to soften its effect in her next sentence.

"I can't express how much I appreciate your telling me this," she said. "I'll confess to you I wished to think that something of that kind had happened. I wished to believe that—that you had made this determination alone. When I met you that night there was something about you I couldn't account for. I haven't been able to account for it until now."

She paused, confused, fearful that she had gone too far. A moment later she was sure of it. A look came into his eyes that frightened her.

"You've thought of me?" he said.

"You must know," she replied, "that you have an unusual personality—a striking one. I can go so far as to say that I remembered you when you reappeared at Mrs. Grenfell's—" she hesitated.

He rose, and walked to the far end of the tiled pavement of the pergola, and stood for a moment looking out over the sea. Then he turned to her.



“I either like a person or I don’t,” he said. “And I tell you frankly I have never met a woman whom I cared for as I do you. I hope you’re not going to insist upon a probationary period of months before you decide whether you can reciprocate.”

Here indeed was a speech in his other character, and she seemed to see, in a flash, his whole life in it. There was a touch of boyishness that appealed, a touch of insistent masterfulness that alarmed. She recalled that Mrs. Shorter had said of him that he had never had to besiege a fortress—the white flag had always appeared too quickly. Of course there was the mystery of Mrs. Maitland—still to be cleared up. It was plain, at least, that resistance merely made him unmanageable. She smiled.

Page 31

“It seems to me,” she said, “that in two days we have become astonishingly intimate.”

“Why shouldn’t we?” he demanded.

But she was not to be led into casuistry.

“I’ve been reading the biography you recommended,” she said.

He continued to look at her a moment, and laughed as he sat down beside her. Later he walked home with her. A dinner and bridge followed, and it was after midnight when she returned. As her maid unfastened her gown she perceived that her pincushion had been replaced by the one she had received at the ball.

“Did you put that there, Mathilde?” she asked.

Mathilde had. She had seen it on madame’s bureau, and thought madame wished it there. She would replace the old one at once.

“No,” said Honora, “you may leave it, now.”

“Bien, madame,” said the maid, and glanced at her mistress, who appeared to have fallen into a revery.

It had seemed strange to her to hear people talking about him at the dinner that night, and once or twice her soul had sprung to arms to champion him, only to remember that her knowledge was special. She alone of all of them understood, and she found herself exulting in the superiority. The amazed comment when the heir to the Chiltern fortune had returned to the soil of his ancestors had been revived on his arrival in Newport. Ned Carrington, amid much laughter, had quoted the lines about Prince Hal:

“To mock the expectations of the world,
To frustrate prophecies.”

Honora disliked Mr. Carrington.

Perhaps the events of Thursday, would better be left in the confusion in which they remained in Honora’s mind. She was awakened by penetrating, persistent, and mournful notes which for some time she could not identify, although they sounded oddly familiar; and it was not until she felt the dampness of the coverlet and looked at the white square of her open windows that she realized there was a fog. And it had not lifted when Chiltern came in the afternoon. They discussed literature—but the book had fallen to the floor. ‘Absit omen’! If printing had then been invented, undoubtedly there would have been a book instead of an apple in the third chapter of Genesis. He confided to her his plan of collecting his father’s letters and of writing the General’s life. Honora, too, would enjoy writing a book. Perhaps the thought of the pleasure of



collaboration occurred to them both at once; it was Chiltern who wished that he might have her help in the difficult places; she had, he felt, the literary instinct. It was not the Viking who was talking now. And then, at last, he had risen reluctantly to leave. The afternoon had flown. She held out her hand with a frank smile.

“Good-by,” she said. “Good-by, and good luck.”

“But I may not go,” he replied.

She stood dismayed.

“I thought you told me you were going on Friday—to-morrow.”



Page 32

"I merely set that as a probable date. I have changed my mind. There is no immediate necessity. Do you wish me to go?" he demanded.

She had turned away, and was straightening the books on the table.

"Why should I?" she said.

"You wouldn't object to my remaining a few days more?" He had reached the doorway.

"What have I to do with your staying?" she asked.

"Everything," he answered—and was gone.

She stood still. The feeling that possessed her now was rebellion, and akin to hate.

Her conduct, therefore, becomes all the more incomprehensible when we find her accepting, the next afternoon, his invitation to sail on Mr. Farnham's yacht, the 'Folly'. It is true that the gods will not exonerate Mrs. Shorter. That lady, who had been bribed with Alfred Dewing, used her persuasive powers; she might be likened to a skilful artisan who blew wonderful rainbow fabrics out of glass without breaking it; she blew the tender passion into a thousand shapes, and admired every one. Her criminal culpability consisted in forgetting the fact that it could not be trusted with children.

Nature seems to delight in contrasts. As though to atone for the fog she sent a dazzling day out of the northwest, and the summer world was stained in new colours. The yachts were whiter, the water bluer, the grass greener; the stern grey rocks themselves flushed with purple. The wharves were gay, and dark clustering foliage hid an enchanted city as the Folly glided between dancing buoys. Honora, with a frightened glance upward at the great sail, caught her breath. And she felt rather than saw the man beside her guiding her seaward.

A discreet expanse of striped yellow deck separated them from the wicker chairs where Mrs. Shorter and Mr. Dewing were already established. She glanced at the profile of the Viking, and allowed her mind to dwell for an instant upon the sensations of that other woman who had been snatched up and carried across the ocean. Which was the quality in him that attracted her? his lawlessness, or his intellect and ambition? Never, she knew, had he appealed to her more than at this moment, when he stood, a stern figure at the wheel, and vouchsafed her nothing but commonplaces. This, surely, was his element.

Presently, however, the yacht slid out from the infolding land into an open sea that stretched before them to a silver-lined horizon. And he turned to her with a disconcerting directness, as though taking for granted a subtle understanding between them.



“How well you sail,” she said, hurriedly.

“I ought to be able to do that, at least,” he declared.

“I saw you when you came in the other day, although I didn’t know who it was until afterwards. I was standing on the rocks near the Fort, and my heart was in my mouth.”

He answered that the Dolly was a good sea boat.

“So you decided to forgive me,” he said.



Page 33

“For what?”

“For staying in Newport.”

Before accepting the invitation she had formulated a policy, cheerfully confident in her ability to carry it out. For his decision not to leave Newport had had an opposite effect upon her than that she had anticipated; it had oddly relieved the pressure. It had given her a chance to rally her forces; to smile, indeed, at an onslaught that had so disturbed her; to examine the matter in a more rational light. It had been a cause for self-congratulation that she had scarcely thought of him the night before. And to-day, in her blue veil and blue serge gown, she had boarded the ‘Folly’ with her wits about her. She forgot that it was he who, so to speak, had the choice of ground and weapons.

“I have forgiven you. Why shouldn’t I, when you have so royally atoned.”

But he obstinately refused to fence. There was nothing apologetic in this man, no indirectness in his method of attack. Parry adroitly as she might, he beat down her guard. As the afternoon wore on there were silences, when Honora, by staring over the waters, tried to collect her thoughts. But the sea was his ally, and she turned her face appealingly toward the receding land. Fascination and fear struggled within her as she had listened to his onslaughts, and she was conscious of being moved by what he was, not by what he said. Vainly she glanced at the two representatives of an ironically satisfied convention, only to realize that they were absorbed in a milder but no less entrancing aspect of the same topic, and would not thank her for an interruption.

“Do you wish me to go away?” he asked at last abruptly, almost rudely.

“Surely,” she said, “your work, your future isn’t in Newport.”

“You haven’t answered my question.”

“It’s because I have no right to answer it,” she replied. “Although we have known each other so short a time, I am your friend. You must realize that. I am not conventional. I have lived long enough to understand that the people one likes best are not necessarily those one has known longest. You interest me—I admit it frankly—I speak to you sincerely. I am even concerned that you shall find happiness, and I feel that you have the power to make something of yourself. What more can I say? It seems to me a little strange,” she added, “that under the circumstances I should say so much. I can give no higher proof of my friendship.”

He did not reply, but gave a sharp order to the crew. The sheet was shortened, and the Folly obediently headed westward against the swell, flinging rainbows from her bows as she ran. Mrs. Shorter and Dewing returned at this moment from the cabin, where they had been on a tour of inspection.



“Where are you taking us, Hugh?” said Mrs. Shorter. “Nowhere in particular,” he replied.

“Please don’t forget that I am having people to dinner to-night. That’s all I ask. What have you done to him, Honora, to put him in such a humour?”



Page 34

Honora laughed.

"I hadn't noticed anything peculiar about him," she answered.

"This boat reminds me of Adele," said Mrs. Shorter. "She loved it. I can see how she could get a divorce from Dicky—but the 'Folly'! She told me yesterday that the sight of it made her homesick, and Eustace Rindge won't leave Paris."

It suddenly occurred to Honora, as she glanced around the yacht, that Mrs. Rindge rather haunted her.

"So that is your answer," said Chiltern, when they were alone again.

"What other can I give you?"

"Is it because you are married?" he demanded.

She grew crimson.

"Isn't that an unnecessary question?"

"No," he declared. "It concerns me vitally to understand you. You were good enough to wish that I should find happiness. I have found the possibility of it—in you."

"Oh," she cried, "don't say such things!"

"Have you found happiness?" he asked.

She turned her face from him towards their shining wake. But he had seen that her eyes were filled with sudden tears.

"Forgive me," he pleaded; "I did not mean to be brutal. I said that because I felt as I have never in my life felt before. As I did not know I could feel. I can't account for it, but I ask you to believe me."

"I can account for it," she answered presently, with a strange gentleness. "It is because you met me at a critical time. Such-coincidences often occur in life. I happened to be a woman; and, I confess it, a woman who was interested. I could not have been interested if you had been less real, less sincere. But I saw that you were going through a crisis; that you might, with your powers, build up your life into a splendid and useful thing. And, womanlike, my instinct was to help you. I should not have allowed you to go on, but—but it all happened so quickly that I was bewildered. I—I do not understand it myself."

He listened hungrily, and yet at times with evident impatience.



“No,” he said, “I cannot believe that it was an accident. It was you—”

She stopped him with an imploring gesture.

“Please,” she said, “please let us go in.”

Without an instant’s hesitation he brought the sloop about and headed her for the light-ship on Brenton’s reef, and they sailed in silence. Awhile she watched the sapphire waters break to dazzling whiteness under the westerning sun. Then, in an ecstasy she did not seek to question, she closed her eyes to feel more keenly the swift motion of their flight. Why not? The sea, the winds of heaven, had aided others since the dawn of history. Legend was eternally true. On these very shores happiness had awaited those who had dared to face primeval things.

She looked again, this time towards an unpeopled shore. No sentinel guarded the uncharted reefs, and the very skies were smiling, after the storm, at the scudding fates.



Page 35

It was not until they were landlocked once more, and the Folly was reluctantly beating back through the Narrows, that he spoke again.

“So you wish me to go away?”

“I cannot see any use in your staying,” she replied, “after what you have said. I—cannot see,” she added in a low voice, “that for you to remain would be to promote the happiness of—either of us. You should have gone to-day.”

“You care!” he exclaimed.

“It is because I do not wish to care that I tell you to go—”

“And you refuse happiness?”

“It could be happiness for neither of us,” said Honora. “The situation would be impossible. You are not a man who would be satisfied with moderation. You would insist upon having all. And you do not know what you are asking.”

“I know that I want you,” he said, “and that my life is won or lost with or without you.”

You have no right to say such a thing.”

“We have each of us but one life to live.”

“And one life to ruin,” she answered. “See, you are running on the rocks!”

He swung the boat around.

“Others have rebuilt upon ruins,” he declared.

She smiled at him.

“But you are taking my ruins for granted,” she said. “You would make them first.”

He relapsed into silence again. The Folly needed watching. Once he turned and spoke her name, and she did not rebuke him.

“Women have a clearer vision of the future than men,” she began presently, “and I know you better than you know yourself. What—what you desire would not mend your life, but break it utterly. I am speaking plainly. As I have told you, you interest me; so far that is the extent of my feelings. I do not know whether they would go any farther, but on your account as well as my own I will not take the risk. We have come to an impasse. I am sorry. I wish we might have been friends, but what you have said makes it impossible. There is only one thing to do, and that is for you to go away.”



He eased off his sheet, rounded the fort, and set a course for the moorings. The sun hung red above the silhouetted roofs of Conanicut, and a quaint tower in the shape of a minaret stood forth to cap the illusions of a day.

The wind was falling, the harbour quieting for the night, and across the waters, to the tones of a trumpet, the red bars of the battleship's flag fluttered to the deck. The Folly, making a wide circle, shot into the breeze, and ended by gliding gently up to the buoy.

CHAPTER V

THE SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST

It was Saturday morning, but Honora had forgotten the fact. Not until she was on the bottom step did the odour of cigarettes reach her and turn her faint; and she clutched suddenly at the banisters. Thus she stood for a while, motionless, and then went quietly into the drawing-room. The French windows looking out on the porch were, as usual, open.



Page 36

It was an odd sensation thus to be regarding one's husband objectively. For the first time he appeared to her definitely as a stranger; as much a stranger as the man who came once a week to wind Mrs. Forsythe's clocks. Nay, more. There was a sense of intrusion in this visit, of invasion of a life with which he had nothing to do. She examined him ruthlessly, very much as one might examine a burglar taken unawares. There was the inevitable shirt with the wide pink stripes, of the abolishment or even of the effective toning down of which she had long since despaired. On the contrary, like his complexion, they evinced a continual tendency towards a more aggressive colour. There was also the jewelled ring, now conspicuously held aloft on a fat little finger. The stripes appeared that morning as the banner of a hated suzerain, the ring as the emblem of his overlordship. He did not belong in that house; everything in it cried out for his removal; and yet it was, in the eyes of the law at least, his. By grace of that fact she was here, enjoying it. At that instant, as though in evidence of this, he laid down a burning cigarette on a mahogany stand he had had brought out to him. Honora seized an ash tray, hurried to the porch, and picked up the cigarette in the tips of her fingers.

"Howard, I wish you would be more careful of Mrs. Forsythe's furniture," she exclaimed.

"Hello, Honora," he said, without looking up. "I see by the Newport paper that old Maitland is back from Europe. Things are skyrocketing in Wall Street." He glanced at the ash tray, which she had pushed towards him. "What's the difference about the table? If the old lady makes a row, I'll pay for it."

"Some things are priceless," she replied; "you do not seem to realize that."

"Not this rubbish," said Howard. "Judging by the fuss she made over the inventory, you'd think it might be worth something."

"She has trusted us with it," said Honora. Her voice shook.

He stared at her.

"I never saw you look like that," he declared.

"It's because you never look at me closely," she answered.

He laughed, and resumed his reading. She stood awhile by the railing. Across the way, beyond the wall, she heard Mr. Chamberlin's shrill voice berating a gardener.

"Howard," she asked presently, "why do you come to Newport at all?"

"Why do I come to Newport?" he repeated. "I don't understand you."

"Why do you come up here every week?"



“Well,” he said, “it isn’t a bad trip on the boat, and I get a change from New York; and see men I shouldn’t probably see otherwise.” He paused and looked at her again, doubtfully. “Why do you ask such a question?”

“I wished to be sure,” said Honora.

“Sure of what?”

“That the-arrangement suited you perfectly. You do not feel—the lack of anything, do you?”

“What do you mean?”



Page 37

“You wouldn’t care to stay in Newport all the time?”

“Not if I know myself,” he replied. “I leave that part of it to you.”

“What part of it?” she demanded.

“You ought to know. You do it pretty well,” he laughed. “By the way, Honora, I’ve got to have a conference with Mr. Wing to-day, and I may not be home to lunch.”

“We’re dining there to-night,” she told him, in a listless voice.

Upon Ethel Wing had descended the dominating characteristics of the elder James, who, whatever the power he might wield in Wall Street, was little more than a visitor in Newport. It was Ethel’s house, from the hour she had swept the Reel and Carter plans (which her father had brought home) from the table and sent for Mr. Farwell. The forehanded Reginald arrived with a sketch, and the result, as every one knows, is one of the chief monuments to his reputation. So exquisitely proportioned is its simple, two-storied marble front as seen through the trees left standing on the old estate, that tourists, having beheld the Chamberlin and other mansions, are apt to think this niggardly for a palace. Two infolding wings, stretching towards the water, enclose a court, and through the slender white pillars of the peristyle one beholds in fancy the summer seas of Greece.

Looking out on the court, and sustaining this classic illusion, is a marble-paved dining room, with hangings of Pompeiian red, and frescoes of nymphs and satyrs and piping shepherds, framed between fluted pilasters, dimly discernible in the soft lights.

In the midst of these surroundings, at the head of his table, sat the great financier whose story but faintly concerns this chronicle; the man who, every day that he had spent down town in New York in the past thirty years, had eaten the same meal in the same little restaurant under the street. This he told Honora, on his left, as though it were not history. He preferred apple pie to the greatest of artistic triumphs of his daughter’s chef, and had it; a glorified apple pie, with frills and furbelows, and whipped cream which he angrily swept to one side with contempt.

“That isn’t apple pie,” he said. “I’d like to take that Frenchman to the little New England hilltown where I went to school and show him what apple pie is.”

Such were the autobiographical snatches—by no means so crude as they sound that reached her intelligence from time to time. Mr. Wing was too subtle to be crude; and he had married a Playfair, a family noted for good living. Honora did not know that he was fond of talking of that apple pie and the New England school at public banquets; nor did Mr. Wing suspect that the young woman whom he was apparently addressing, and who seemed to be hanging on his words, was not present.



It was not until she had put her napkin on the table that she awoke with a start and gazed into his face and saw written there still another history than the one he had been telling her. The face was hidden, indeed, by the red beard. What she read was in the little eyes that swept her with a look of possession: possession in a large sense, let it be emphasized, that an exact justice be done Mr. James Wing,—she was one of the many chattels over which his ownership extended; bought and paid for with her husband. A hot resentment ran through her at the thought.



Page 38

Mr. Cuthbert, who was many kinds of a barometer, sought her out later in the courtyard.

“Your husband’s feeling tiptop, isn’t he?” said he.

“He’s been locked up with old Wing all day. Something’s in the wind, and I’d give a good deal to know what it is.”

“I’m afraid I can’t inform you,” replied Honora.

Mr. Cuthbert apologized.

“Oh, I didn’t mean to ask you for a tip,” he declared, quite confused. “I didn’t suppose you knew. The old man is getting ready to make another killing, that’s all. You don’t mind my telling you you look stunning tonight, do you?”

Honora smiled.

“No, I don’t mind,” she said.

Mr. Cuthbert appeared to be ransacking the corners of his brain for words.

“I was watching you to-night at the table while Mr. Wing was talking to you. I don’t believe you heard a thing he said.”

“Such astuteness,” she answered, smiling at him, “astounds me.”

He laughed nervously.

“You’re different than you’ve ever been since I’ve known you,” he went on, undismayed. “I hope you won’t think I’m making love to you. Not that I shouldn’t like to, but I’ve got sense enough to see it’s no use.”

Her reply was unexpected.

“What makes you think that?” she asked curiously.

“Oh, I’m not a fool,” said Mr. Cuthbert. “But if I were a poet, or that fellow Dewing, I might be able to tell you what your eyes were like to-night.”

“I’m glad you’re not,” said Honora.

As they were going in, she turned for a lingering look at the sea. A strong young moon rode serenely in the sky and struck a path of light across the restless waters. Along this shimmering way the eyes of her companion followed hers.



“I can tell you what that colour is, at least. Do you remember the blue, transparent substance that used to be on favours at children’s parties?” he asked. “There were caps inside of them, and crackers.”

“I believe you are a poet, after all,” she said.

A shadow fell across the flags. Honora did not move.

“Hello, Chiltern,” said Cuthbert. “I thought you were playing bridge...”

“You haven’t looked at me once to-night,” he said, when Cuthbert had gone in.

She was silent.

“Are you angry?”

“Yes, a little,” she answered. “Do you blame me?”

The vibration of his voice in the moonlit court awoke an answering chord in her; and a note of supplication from him touched her strangely. Logic in his presence was a little difficult—there can be no doubt of that.

“I must go in,” she said unsteadily, “my carriage is waiting.”

But he stood in front of her.

“I should have thought you would have gone,” she said.

“I wanted to see you again.”

“And now?”

“I can’t leave while you feel this way,” he pleaded. “I can’t abandon what I have of you—what you will let me take. If I told you I would be reasonable—”



Page 39

“I don’t believe in miracles,” she said, recovering a little; “at least in modern ones. The question is, could you become reasonable?”

“As a last resort,” he replied, with a flash of humour and a touch of hope. “If you would—commute my sentence.”

She passed him, and picking up her skirts, paused in the window.

“I will give you one more chance,” she said.

This was the conversation that, by repeating itself, filled the interval of her drive home. So oblivious was she to Howard’s presence, that he called her twice from her corner of the carriage after the vehicle had stopped; and he halted her by seizing her arm as she was about to go up the stairs. She followed him mechanically into the drawing-room.

He closed the door behind them, and the other door into the darkened dining room. He even took a precautionary glance out of the window of the porch. And these movements, which ordinarily might have aroused her curiosity, if not her alarm, she watched with a profound indifference. He took a stand before the Japanese screen in front of the fireplace, thrust his hands in his pockets, cleared his throat, and surveyed her from her white shoulders to the gold-embroidered tips of her slippers.

“I’m leaving for the West in the morning, Honora. If you’ve made any arrangements for me on Sunday, you’ll have to cancel them. I may be gone two weeks, I may be gone a month. I don’t know.”

“Yes,” she said.

“I’m going to tell you something those fellows in the smoking room to-night did their best to screw out of me. If you say anything about it, all’s up between me and Wing. The fact that he picked me out to engineer the thing, and that he’s going to let me in if I push it through, is a pretty good sign that he thinks something of my business ability, eh?”

“You’d better not tell me, Howard,” she said.

“You’re too clever to let it out,” he assured her; and added with a chuckle: “If it goes through, order what you like. Rent a house on Bellevue Avenue—any thing in reason.”

“What is it?” she asked, with a sudden premonition that the thing had a vital significance for her.

“It’s the greatest scheme extant,” he answered with elation. “I won’t go into details—you wouldn’t understand’em. Mr. Wing and some others have tried the thing before, nearer home, and it worked like a charm. Street railways. We buy up the little lines for



nothing, and get an interest in the big ones, and sell the little lines for fifty times what they cost us, and guarantee big dividends for the big lines.”

“It sounds to me,” said Honora, slowly, “as though some one would get cheated.”

“Some one get cheated!” he exclaimed, laughing. “Every one gets cheated, as you call it, if they haven’t enough sense to know what their property’s worth, and how to use it to the best advantage. It’s a case,” he announced, “of the survival of the fittest. Which reminds me that if I’m going to be fit to-morrow I’d better go to bed. Mr. Wing’s to take me to New York on his yacht, and you’ve got to have your wits about you when you talk to the old man.”